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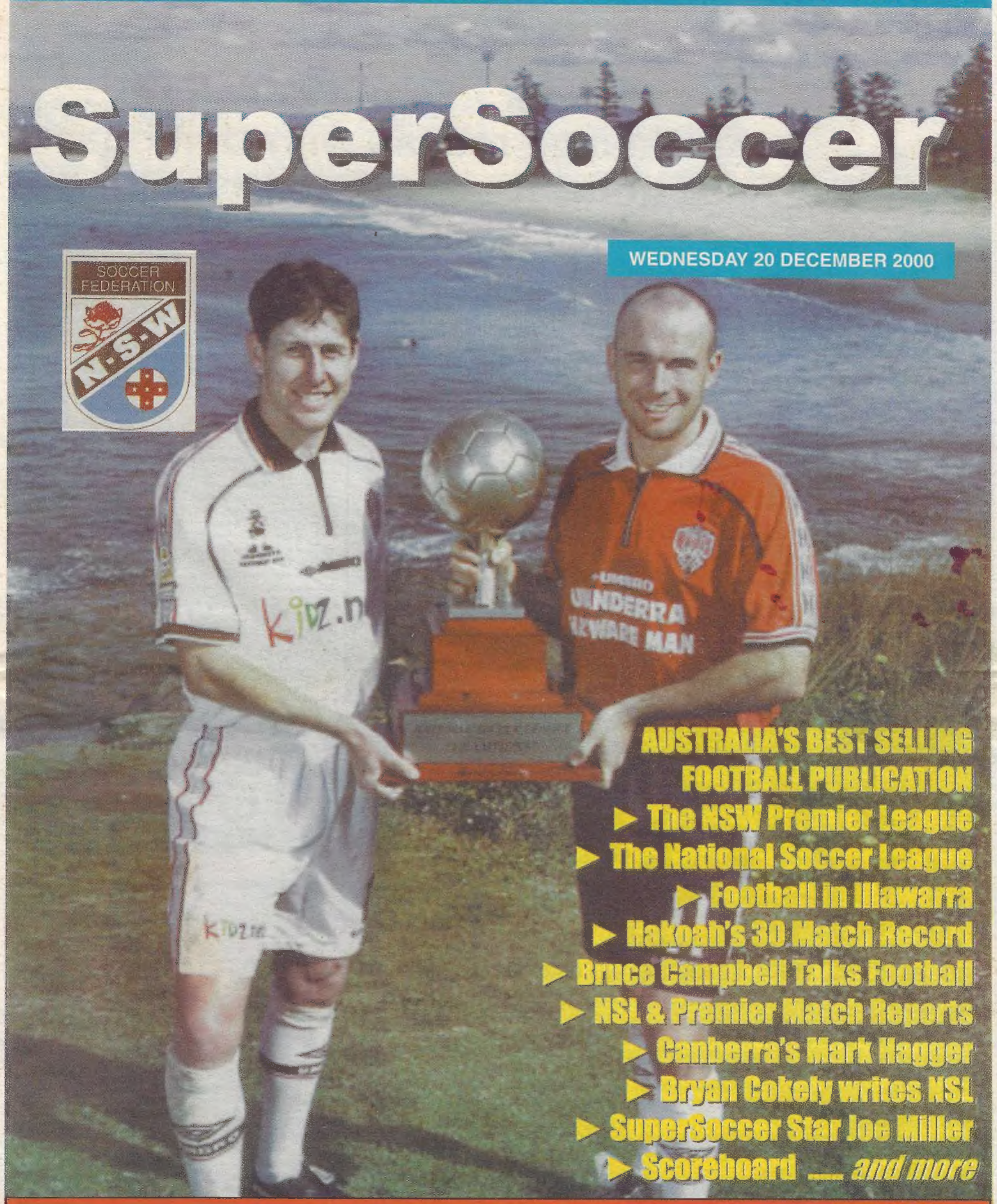
SuperSoccer

WEDNESDAY 20 DECEMBER 2000



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Second Singapore player in court on match-fixing charges

THE flatmate of an Australian soccer player sentenced to jail for match-fixing has denied similar accusations.

German soccer player Lutz Pfannenstiel last week rejected claims he fixed S-League matches, which could land him in jail for up to five years if found guilty, a report said.

His flatmate, Australian Mirko Jurilj who played for Sembawang Rangers, was sentenced to five months' jail after being found guilty on match fixing charges involving the same bookmaker.

Pfannenstiel, the goalkeeper for Geylang United in the S-League competition, appeared in court accused of accepting 18,000 Singapore dollars ($A19,135) to rig results, the *Straits Times* reported.

Both he and Jurilj were arrested during a widespread investigation which exposed the corrupt underbelly of football in Singapore. At least 15 other players and officials are said to be under suspicion.

The bookmaker, 28-year-old Sivakumar Madasamy, had testified that he offered to help Pfannenstiel win money by placing bets on his behalf.

But the German said he only gave Madasamy his "professional opinion" on the possible outcome of matches and never discussed betting or scoring margins.

"I only gave him my opinion. I never mentioned about scoring. I only told him who I thought could win," Pfannenstiel said.

In Jurilj's trial, Madasamy told the court he outlayed the 22,000 Singapore dollars in three bets, but the money was lost when the results did not go as planned.

Jurilj signed a confession while in custody, which he later claimed was made under duress.

Pfannenstiel said he had not signed a confession.

Last week Singapore football authorities announced they would introduce compulsory lie detector tests from next season in a radical move to stamp out match-fixing and corruption in gambling-crazy Singapore.

"Players will be subjected to polygraphs when directed, just like doping tests," the Football Association of Singapore's competition director Chris Chan said.

"They will not be random tests, but when there's an investigation and reason to suspect something."

Premier League goes into festive recess with Demons in front

By Bruce Campbell

THE NSW Premier League heads into a festive season break with no matches scheduled until the weekend starting January 5.

Meanwhile the NSL continues with its intensity despite demands from within the game for a similar short shutdown.

Australian football's two major media sources, SBS's *On The Ball* and *SuperSoccer* both take breaks while the majority of the metro dailies as well as the major wire services also go into a shortened mode making it very difficult for the game to get publicity.

Traditionally attendances at Christmas time games are down also, reflecting the lack of promotion.

Blacktown City head into the break in top position in the Premier League with their eye on both the inaugural title as well as that 31 undefeated match record.

One loss for Blacktown is the transfer of Chris Bradley during the week.

"I couldn't guarantee him a game," said coach Brian Brown of Bradley's surprise move to Bonnyrigg.

"But then I can't guarantee anyone a starting role.

"With the injuries we've had lately Chris would have definitely been closer to what he wanted with us but then that is a week in football."

Blacktown's match with Central Coast meanwhile slipped into comic book mode.

Originally scheduled for North Power Stadium the match was then changed to Woy Woy because of ground re-surfacing at Gosford.

The Woy Woy date was changed from Saturday back to Friday and then because of a Christmas Carols service that date was also available.

Faced with no home venue the game was then likely to be re-scheduled for late January before the NSWSF stepped in and directed that the game be played last Sunday at either Parramatta or Blacktown.

Finally, and with the entire soccer community now in total confusion, the game was booked for Blacktown on Sunday with a 6.30pm kick off.

The multiple switch left Brown fuming, with players and officials already having booked other arrangements in the belief that the season would be in recess.

Meanwhile Brown's attention will now turn to selecting the NSW Under 20 side which will face Glasgow Rangers in January.

The squad is likely to have a heavy influence from Northern Spirit and possibly Parramatta Power if the Carlton match is dumped.

The balance will include players from the Premier League.

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COVER PICTURE

WOLLONGONG CITY'S Matt Horsley and Alvin Ceccoli with the NSL Championship trophies against Illawarra's beach background.

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Mile emerges as hero at Lille

By Olivier Hamoir

AUSSIE striker Mile Sterjovski has emerged as a key figure as unheralded Lille mount a surprise challenge for the French first division title.

Following in footsteps of Australian-raised strikers like Mark Viduka, Christian Vieri, Paul Agostino and Harry Kewell, Sterjovski is making a big impact in a major European league.

He scored both goals as Lille stunned big-spending Paris St Germain 2-0 on Wednesday night to move to just one point behind leaders Girondins Bordeaux.

A fiercely struck shot and a well-directed header saw Sterjovski take his goals tally to three in two matches after he also scored in Lille's 2-0 win over Sedan the previous weekend.

"Scoring two goals against PSG is extraordinary," Sterjovski said.

"Everything that's happening to me is like a dream.

"I've worked really hard since arriving in France and that work is starting to pay off."

Sterjovski is on a one-year deal with last season's French second division champions having the option to extend the deal.

The 21-year-old former Parramatta Power player had a trial with Lille in August and was promptly signed.

Coach Vahid Halilhodzic said at the time that he was a good prospect, but probably not ready for the Lille first team.

After viewing Sterjovski's speed, willingness to take on defenders and sharp finishing, Halilhodzic rapidly changed his mind.

"He is just coming out of his shell," Halilhodzic said.

"He found it hard not taking part in our pre-season training and having to adjust to a new team and a new environment, but I have no doubt he'll score more goals for us.

"He has very good technique and is a good finisher. He's very adroit in front of goal and he's young -- still only 21. He'll get better."

Sterjovski said he is surprised at the speed with which he had made his mark in France.

"It is all going fast, much faster than I had expected," he said.

"I only started for the first time a month ago and I can feel my confidence growing with each match.

"I was content just to start, but now I'm starting to score goals, which is amazing."

Sterjovski said scoring against Sedan -- his first goal in Europe -- had given him a lift.

"It was something very special," he said.

"It was fantastic.

"I've already scored lots of goals, of course, but this was something different."

Sterjovski grew up in the Australian steel city of Wollongong after his parents migrated to Australia from Macedonia in the 1960s.

He began playing as a junior at Sydney United and then joined Parramatta after playing for Australia in the 1999 World Youth Championships.

He was recommended to Lille by Australian national team coach Frank Farina, who played in France for both Lille and Strasbourg.

"Frank has very good memories of playing in France and now I know why," Sterjovski said.

"The welcome I have been given here has been tremendous.

"There is a great team spirit and even though I don't speak a lot of French, I understand what is being said on the field.

"Soccer has its own language.

"I feel very much at home because this is a real team that works hard, particularly when the going gets tough.

"Our greatest strength isn't that we have star players. It's our cohesion and solidarity."

Back home, Sterjovski's father, a taxi driver, follows his son's every move.

"He wasn't a footballer himself, but he had a great passion for the game and passed it on to me," he said.

Bosnich thrown unexpected United lifeline

Manchester United's troubled star goalkeeper Mark Bosnich may have been thrown a lifeline at the club he refuses to leave.

Currently out injured, Bosnich has been relegated to number three status following a rift with manager Sir Alex Ferguson.

Bosnich has also been criticised for his weakness in kicking.

He has been offered several loan deals but has refused them all.

A series of injuries and disciplinary spats have also hampered his attempts to reclaim his number one position following his move two seasons ago from Aston Villa.

But last week Dutch goalkeeper Raimond van der Gouw announced that he may join a United States team when his contract ends next northern summer.

"I'm open to another exciting adventure. There have been signs of interest coming from America," he told Dutch paper *Algemeen Dagblad*.

"I would naturally need to discuss it with my family, but I would certainly love to play in Florida.

"I've still got several good years in me. Another possibility would be to go back to the Netherlands."

But Van der Gouw, who played in the 3-3 draw at Charlton, has not written off his chances of remaining with United.

The 37-year-old is currently preferred to Mark Bosnich as the club's No.2 keeper behind Frenchman Fabien Barthez.

If the Dutchman moves on United may well choose to keep the problematic Bosnich who on his day is amongst the best in the world.

NSW Premier League

NSW Premier League

www.nswpremierleague.com

Round 8 Fixtures

FIRST GRADE: KICK OFF 7pm, UNDER 19s: 5pm

Saturday 6 January

St George Saints v Central Coast Coasties	ST GEORGE STADIUM
Blacktown City Demons v Bonnyrigg White Eagles	GABBIE STADIUM
Sutherland Sharks v Canterbury Marrickville	SEYMOUR SHAW
Belconnen Blue Devils v Leichhardt Tigers	WEST BELCONNEN SPTS
Penrith Panthers v Parramatta Eagles	ANDREWS ROAD FIELD

RE-SCHEDULED FIXTURES

Wednesday 20 December

FIRST GRADE: KICK OFF 8pm, UNDER 19s: 6pm

St George v Parramatta	ST GEORGE STADIUM

Saturday 23 December

FIRST GRADE: KICK OFF 7pm, UNDER 19s: 5pm

Bonnyrigg v Canterbury	Serbian Centre

Friday 29 December

FIRST GRADE: KICK OFF 8pm, UNDER 19s: 6pm

Canterbury v Leichhardt	Henson Park

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Sermanni breaks Cosmos coaching record

CANBERRA Cosmos coach, Tom Sermanni, broke a club record last weekend when he took charge of his 60th NSL match for Cosmos against Sydney Olympic.

It broke the record for the most Cosmos games coached, previously held by inaugural coach Mike Lyons.

Sermanni's experience and length of tenure with the club has built stability and consistency.

When he commenced with Cosmos, Sermanni's goals were to develop not only players that play good football, but a sense of pride and tradition and the encouragement of players' contribution to the organisation as a whole.

"It's about stability, responsibility, awareness and pride," he said.

"Cosmos is a team that is well-respected in the National Soccer League.

"We are a tough team to beat, both at home and away.

"I didn't realise that I'd broken Mike's record, and I'm very pleased to have reached this point," Sermanni said.

"I'm very pleased to still be with the Club, especially with the way it's now developing.

"I hope and trust we're in a healthier state on the field than when I first took over and we'll continue to improve our performances and results to turn the team into one that is challenging the top teams in the competition.

"Being a Canberra person and being involved in a club in Canberra is an added bonus.

"It has been a very rewarding experience to be part of this community's team and to have received the support I have in this job.

"I am very thankful for the help I have received from all sectors of the soccer community, Cosmos supporters and Canberra's media."

Interestingly, Sermanni's first NSL coaching position was with Sydney Olympic in the 1993/94 season.

Current Sydney Olympic coach Branko Culina was with Cosmos in 1997/98.

Culina's biggest coaching victory occurred when he was in charge of Cosmos in 1998, with an 8-1 win over Sydney Olympic.

And in other Cosmos news Marcus Phillips, who had returned from injury last weekend, has again been sidelined with an ankle injury sustained at training last week.

And last Thursday Soccer Australia has issued an International Transfer Certificate for new Cosmos signing Milton Cortes after correspondence from FIFA confirmed that the Uruguayan Football Association was in breach of FIFA regulations in demanding a USD500 payment from Cosmos.

THE COSMOS COACHES

Mike Lyons	1995/96 96/97
Branko Culina	1997/98*
Walter Valeri/Gordon Hunter	1997/98#
Rale Rasic	1997/98 98/99*
Tony Brennan	1998/99#
Tommy Sermanni	98/99 99/00 00/01

* indicates sacked during season
\# indicates caretaker coach

Vidmar out, Big Oz back

RANGERS defender Tony Vidmar has made it clear he intends to quit Ibrox at the end of the season.

The Australian international is no more than a squad player under Dick Advocaat and says he wants a new challenge.

He said: ``I worry because my progress has stopped.

"I want regular first team football but at the moment the manager has other players he prefers.

"So at the end of my contract I'll move on."

The 30-year-old wants to stay in Europe.

Vidmar's brother Aurelio is currently starring for Adelaide City after many years playing in Europe.

The Australian international is no more than a squad player under Dick Advocaat and says he wants a new challenge.

Vidmar's announcement may spark interest from south of the border with English Premiership clubs.

Equally, Rangers may now be willing to cash in on the player rather than wait until the end of the season when he could leave on a free transfer.

And Craig Moore, Rangers other Aussie international, could be set for a shock comeback for Rangers early in the New Year.

The Ibrox star has been missing for most of the season after surgery on a knee injury.

But earlier scare stories that he would automatically miss the rest of the championship are news to manager Dick Advocaat.

Now the gaffer intends to take the classy stopper with the rest of his squad to Florida for mid-winter training.

And it could set the man the fans call Big Oz up to return and bolster an Ibrox defence which has come under fire at home and abroad.

Advocaat said: "I didn't say Craig would be out for the whole campaign and nobody inside the club has told me that's the case.

"I know he hasn't given up hope of playing again this season and that's the most important thing.

"But it's only three weeks since his operation in Australia so he can't possibly be rushed.

"February might be a realistic target for him to aim at where a comeback is concerned.

"In the meantime, I can turn to a player like Tony Vidmar for emergency cover when Lorenzo Amoruso and Arthur Numan go out of the side because of suspension."

Moore's return could signal the end of the line for Amoruso at Ibrox when the season is over.

The Italian was relieved of the captaincy last month and has been unhappy since the decision was taken to hand over his armband to Barry Ferguson.

CAMDEN TIGERS SOCCER CLUB

is proud to announce its promotion to STATE LEAGUE DIVISION 2 for 2001

TRIALS are at:
Ron Dine Reserve, Cowper Drive, South Camden
Commencing on Tuesday 9th January, 20001 at 6.30pm
Players are invited to attend these trials for Under 18, Under 21 and First Grade commencing on the above night under First Grade Coach Matthew Hughes and Under 18 Coach John Kernahan.

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Tony Genovese (First grade coach)
9642 5372 0412 199 49
Justin Bucarelli (Under 21s Head Coach)
9715 7454 0419 581 581

Leeds United and Celtic in tour talks with Labbozzetta

SOCCER Australia is considering inviting British giants Celtic and Leeds United for matches in Sydney and Melbourne next June, board member Tony Labbozzetta has said.

"It's in the embryonic stages," Labbozzetta said. "It's only a proposal. There's been a submission made to Soccer Australia. The matter is being further addressed."

English premier league club Leeds have three Australian stars in their team, Harry Kewell, Jacob Burns and Mark Viduka.

A long, drawn-out row between Leeds and the Australians preceded the Sydney Olympics in September with the club reluctant to release either Viduka or Kewell.

In the end Kewell was injured and missed the Olympics anyway, but Viduka joined the squad two days before Australia lost their opening match 1-0 to Italy. Viduka failed to score a goal in the tournament. Leeds tried to have him sent back to England after two matches when it was clear Australia would not progress to the next stage.

Australian Olympic soccer coach Raul Blanco, who was sacked on Tuesday, said at the time that Viduka would play Australia's third pool match against Honduras, whether Leeds liked it or not.

"Leeds United have been selfish and shown us no respect, so why should I show them any now," said Blanco.

Labbozzetta said there were "no major dramas" between Leeds and SA.

"It's question of a club that has three of our better players and we have an understanding," he said. "(Australian coach) Frank Farina has a good understanding with their coach (David O'Leary) and they've been talking.

"As far as Soccer Australia goes we don't have any problems with Leeds United. These two clubs would be ideal for us."

Labbozzetta said Australia would be playing

in the Confederations Cup in South Korea and Japan in late May and early June and were hoping to play an international against England in London on May 26.

EDITORIAL COMMENT:
Leeds United are hardly a friend of Australian football.

Despite their stature as a major club they have continually ignored any sensible request form Australian authorities for the release of or players.

The news that this tour is even being considered must have them laughing their heads off in the back rooms at Elland Room.

Soccer Australia must start to grow p and accept its position as a national body.

Give Leeds the kind of treatment which their lack of manners so richly deserves rather than bringing them on what will undoubtedly be a combination of a holiday and a further raid on our young talent.

THE STAFF &
JOURNALISTS OF
SuperSoccer
wish all of our readers a
MERRY XMAS &
A HAPPY NEW YEAR
PLEASE DRIVE SAFELY
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THEREAFTER IN 2001

ARNIE COULD SIGN GERS YOUTH PLAYERS

By Bruce Campbell

AS announced in *SuperSoccer* in our last few issues the Rangers Football Club youth team will travel to Sydney for a development tour in early January.

Northern Spirit officials say that it is the first step towards building a solid relationship that will one day bring the Rangers first grade side to Sydney.

Rangers will play five matches on the tour including two matches against the Australian Under 20 side, a clash with Northern Spirit and games against the Northern Spirit youth team and a NSW Under 20 select side to be coached by Blacktown City's Brian Brown.

The 19-man squad will arrive in Sydney on January 4 and returns to Scotland on January 23.

The fixture list is as follows:
January 5 Northern Spirit Youth v Rangers Youth North Sydney Oval
January 9 Rangers Youth v Australian U20s Bruce Stadium, Canberra
January 13 Northern Spirit v Rangers Youth North Sydney Oval
January 16 Rangers Youth v Australian U20s North Sydney Oval
January 19 Rangers Youth v NSW U20s select North Sydney Oval

"The Rangers youth team contains some very exciting young players, some of who have played first team football for Rangers," said Northern Spirit Director of Football Bill Collins.

The tour is a development tour for Rangers and there are some stars of the future among the touring party.

The Rangers squad will be accompanied by the Rangers Director of Youth Coaching, Jan Derks, as well as a five-man coaching and medial staff.

As well as looking after the Rangers Youth squad, Derks will also run his eye over the Northern Spirit set up and report to Rangers Football Department regarding the possibility of a tour by the Rangers first grade squad during next season's Winter Shutdown.

Northern Spirit broached the idea of bringing the Rangers first team to Sydney for a tour but they had already booked a winter-shutdown tour to Florida in the United States.

"Rangers first team had already made plans for the winter shutdown but we are hoping they will come down at a later time," Collins said.

The tour is the first step in the Rangers Global Branding plan, which was initiated by the acquisition of Northern Spirit in July.

And Northern Spirits Colin Mitchell heads the other way for a 10 day spell at Ibrox.

Mitchell is expected to report on Spirit's season to date as well as discuss possible player recruitment.

"There is a chance that Spirit will sign a couple of the Rangers Youth team players if they impress coach Graham Arnold on this tour," said a Spirit spokesman.

"The club is still looking to secure a Rangers player and this could be a good opportunity."

Rangers youth side is currently in second place in the SPL Youth League, behind Aberdeen.

Welsh say no

WALES have postponed a planned friendly international against Australia for the second time in six months.

The match, which was scheduled for early February in Cardiff, has been put off at the request of Welsh coach Mark Hughes, who would prefer to hold a three-day training camp in Spain instead.

Soccer Australia is attempting to find alternate European opponents, with Norway, Yugoslavia, Romania and Greece among the options.

Rufer believes job safe

WYNTON Rufer, the coach of the Auckland-based Football Kingz, rejected rumours that he's about to be sacked by the NSL club.

"Even if we lost every game, it would not be a smart thing to do as I am also a player with the club," Rufer said.

Rufer's side is third bottom of the league and he admits that making the play-offs is not a realistic ambition in its second season.

"It's a long-term process and it's just going to have to take time," he said.

"The people in New Zealand just have to understand that we do not have the talent that is available to the Australian clubs."

Johnson told to lay off

AUSSIE ex-pat Richard Johnson has been told to take a fortnight off by his Watford manager, as he comes back from cruciate ligament damage.

The midfielder, who has yet to make an appearance for Watford this season after snapping his cruciates in April, is suffering from thickness in his knee despite the apparent success of knee surgery, as he resumes training in a bid to get back on the park.

New Zealand pulls out

NEW Zealand has pulled out of an international soccer tournament scheduled for India in January, saying it had had difficulty confirming travel and competition details with organisers.

New Zealand Soccer said it had been advised by the Asian Football Confederation to withdraw from the Millennium Super Soccer Cup.

The national body said the tournament had been seen as important preparation for New Zealand's World Cup qualifying games in Auckland in June and it would now seek alternative warm up matches.

Pablo signs

AS EXCLUSIVELY forecast in *SuperSoccer* striker Pablo Cardozo has signed for Sydney Olympic after returning from an unsuccessful stint in Greece with Athinaikos.

Olympic had to beat off a twelfth hour bid by Sydney neighbours, Parramatta Power.

Scarsella elected

SOCCER Australia chairman Basil Scarsella has been elected for a new year term as president of the Oceania Football Confederation the OFC Extra-Ordinary Congress in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

The election was called following the resignation of former OFC President Charles Dempsey in July earlier this year. The long-serving Dempsey resigned his position following his abstention from the voting process for the 2006 FIFA World Cup - which was eventually won by Germany.

Scarsella received the simple majority required of the 23 votes available, each of the 11 OFC members receiving two votes each, as acting President Johnny Tinsley Lulu of Vanuatu had an additional vote.

The election in the end was a direct contest between Scarsella and Tinsley Lulu, after the other two additional candidates Tautulu Roebeck of Samoa and Adrian Wickham of Solomon Islands, withdrew from the contest ahead of the vote.

"I'm obviously very delighted with the result," said Scarsella from Vanuatu. "Oceania is a constantly developing region, and the aim will be to continue moving the region in a forward direction, bringing together and unifying all of the countries to fully realise our potential and strength."

Scarsella meantime will continue as Chairman of Soccer Australia until his successor is appointed at the Annual General Meeting, in February of next year.

www.nswpremierleague.com

Thirty year old record still standing

by Bruce Campbell

INTRIGUE is reigning over just who holds the record for most unbeaten matches in the top level State League competition—and even on how to calculate it.

While some statisticians record all games, including Finals series and league games, some prefer to stick to straight out home and away league fixtures.

There is no parallel with other countries because of Australia's unique format for deciding its champion.

The New South Wales Soccer Federation introduced the Top 4 series way back in 1957 and it has been with us since, although the format has altered over the years.

While there is a case to record finals games it gets blown out somewhat by the fact that not all clubs can extend their season in this way—and at the same time those who do are 'handicapped' just because they are playing the elite clubs.

So for the time being *SuperSoccer* is sticking to the traditional home and away fixtures.

The issue seemed to be a dead one at The Gabbie when Blacktown City found themselves behind to a fired-up St George in Round 6.

For long periods of that game it seemed that a draw was not even on the cards.

"We were really out of it until the second half," said City coach Brian Brown.

"I pushed Vadim Mikoutski further forward then and he made all of the difference for us. Even although we drew level and then went ahead I wasn't disappointed when St George equalised.

"They deserved it and a draw was probably a really good result all round."

Two Darren Iocca goals kept Blacktown's shot at the record intact.

But just what is the record and who holds it?

Football historian Jim Jones has dug into his records and produced the following: "Sydney F.C. Prague had an unbeaten run between 2 August 1958 and 30 August 1959 of 29 home and away games."

Jim then goes on to confirm that on the 25 April 1972 a 2-0 win to Hakoah, ironically against Prague, established a new record of 30 wins.

A check of *SuperSoccer's* own record books reveals that the goals that day were scored by Ray Baartz.

The record acheivement went unnoticed in the Sydney press of the time with the recording of statistical information then even more relegated in status than it is today.

Between 7 September 1980 and 14 March 1982 Sydney Croatia went on a run that equaled the 30 match sequence set by Hakoah but didn't break it as is popularly believed.

Jim also points out that a rescheduled match which was played on 31 August 1980 (a 0-3 loss to Bankstown) could easily be missed out by those just checking the round by round results.

So there it is, at least if you accept that home and away fixtures are the yardstick.

Hakoah have the record with 30 matches, which was later equaled by Sydney Croatia but not beaten as some might think.

And for the record, should Blacktown continue on its present undefeated streak, which would be a huge task, then it will be in line to crack that record in their February Round 14 fixture.

On the way there are a lot of Premier League clubs who would be happy to see the 30-year-old record stay intact—with three league points up for grabs each time.

Darren Iocca: his goal scoring feats are keeping Blacktown City Demons on target for that all-time undefeated record

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Schools International Cup in Canberra

THE final arrangements are being made for the Australian Schools International Cup to be held at the Australian Institute of Sport between 8th and 12th January.

Teams competing are Australia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Northern Ireland Schoolboys, for whom the likes of George Best and Roy Keane once played, last played Australian Schoolboys in December of 1999 in Belfast, where the game ended in a 1-1 draw.

Welsh Colleges are making their second trip to Australia in two years. In 1998 they beat Australian Schoolboys 2-0 at North Sydney Oval.

Last December the Australian Schoolboys extracted their revenge during their UK Tour when they beat the Welsh 3-0 at Llanelli.

New Zealand Schoolboys will arrive in Canberra following a long UK and European tour. Last week they drew 1-1 with Welsh Colleges in very wet conditions.

Australia and New Zealand will also be fighting for the Schoolboys Trans Tasman Trophy that is currently held by Australia following their series win in Brisbane in 1999.

The games are at the AIS Athletics Field and the AIS Soccer Field and admission is free.

Monday 7th January – AIS Athletics Stadium
6.30pm Australian Schools v New Zealand Schools 8.30pm Northern Ireland Schools v Welsh Colleges
Tuesday 8th January– AIS Athletics Stadium
6.30pm New Zealand Schools v Welsh Colleges 8.30pm Australian Schools v Northern Ireland Schools
Wednesday 9th January– AIS Soccer Field
3.00pm New Zealand Schools v Northern Ireland Schools 5.00pm Welsh Colleges v Australian Schools
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Tall, gangly kid breaks NSL record

By Daniel Pace

SERGIO Melta's first memories of Alex Tobin is that of a tall, gangly kid who began training at a soccer club he knew nothing about.

Tobin, the Parramatta Power captain and former Socceroo defender, has come a long way since his national soccer club debut for Adelaide City on May 13, 1984.

On Saturday he travelled to Carrington Park in Bathurst, where he surpassed the all-time NSL appearances record of 445 games held by Melta, his good friend and former Adelaide team-mate.

Melta had been playing for Adelaide City for seven years when he first set eyes on a naive Tobin.

"From all accounts Alex came to the first training session and he didn't even know Adelaide City existed," Melta said.

"That's what I can remember - him being tall and gangly and playing at left back.

"He didn't know who Adelaide City was or where they played but I think he got the message quick smart."

Tobin, 35, is arguably one of the best Australian players never to try his luck overseas but he says he has no regrets.

During his prime in the early '90s, European clubs were limited to three foreign players and it was usually strikers or attacking midfielders who were plucked from the national league.

"I think I have enough confidence in my ability to maybe suggest that if I had gone then I would've done well," Tobin said.

Mitchell did make it overseas and he has no doubts that Tobin, who played 113 internationals for Australia, would have followed the same successful path.

"You can see when all the top talent came back here to play for the Socceroos, Alex was never out of his depth in the training part or the games," Mitchell said.

"He was marking world-class strikers and did a great job on them. The guy never has a bad game."

Tobin attributes his longevity to a rigorous fitness programme and a lucky streak with injury.

But he was quick to point out that despite equalling the record of Melta - who retired in 1995 with a Grand Final loss to Melbourne Knights - he's not about to hang up the boots just yet.

"I didn't want to approach it (beating the record) as a eulogy or a finale because I hope I have a number of seasons left in me," Tobin said.

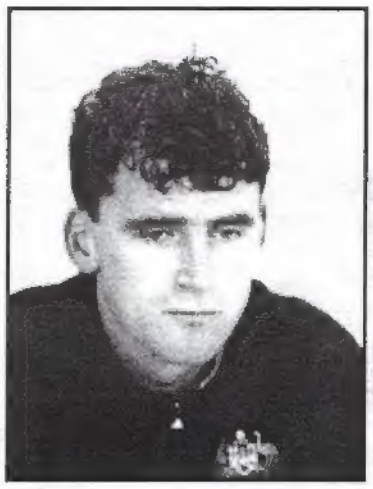
"Hopefully I can add quite a few more games to the tally."

Tobin played 436 matches for Adelaide - winning titles in 1986, 1992 and 1994 - until an acrimonious split last year when he was sacked as junior development officer.

ProFILE

Name: Alex Tobin
Age: 35 Born: Melbourne Position: Defender
Club: Parramatta Power
Previous Club: Adelaide City (1984-2000)
NSL debut: Adelaide City v South Melbourne, May 13, 1984
NSL games: 445 (Adelaide City 436, Parramatta 9)
NSL goals: 29
Honours: NSL championship 1986, 1992, 1994
NSL Cup: 1989, 1992
Marston Medal: 1992, 1994
NSL finals: 38 (record)
Red Card: One (against Newcastle, 1999)
Socceroo games: 113 (captain, 1997-99)
International debut: v IFK Gothenburg, Sydney, January 10 1988
Last match for Socceroos: v Manchester United, Sydney, July 18 1999
World Cup campaigns: 1990, 1994, 1998
Olympics: Seoul, 1988

And what some of the NSL coaches said .....



Tom Sermanni – Canberra Cosmos
"I believe it is Alex's unassuming and professional manner and strength of character that has contributed to his achievement. I have never heard a negative comment about Alex, either on or off the field, and this is a great credit to him both as a player and a person."
Micky Petersen – South Melbourne
"Like all champions, Alex's achievements in the game stand alone.."
Bernd Stange – Perth Glory
"Alex hasn't just relied on his skill and ability on the pitch to achieve what he has to date. His personality and attitude both on and off the pitch has made him one of the better leaders in Australian soccer".
Vlado Vanis - Melbourne Knights
"Alex has been a great ambassador for the sport of soccer both on and off the field."
Jeff Hopkins – Eastern Pride
"A real icon of Australian soccer. Alex's record as a national league and international player speaks for itself. He is a great role model for youngsters starting out in the game."
John Kosmina – Brisbane Strikers
"Alex's longevity in the NSL is a tribute to his attitude and love for the game. He is a tough and honest competitor, a fine role model to youngsters and it is only fitting a player of his ilk should hold the appearance record."
Alan Hunter – Sydney United
"Alex epitomises what you can achieve with hard work and persistence. Saturday night's record is proof of his love of our great game."
Graham Arnold - Northern Spirit
"Having played with and against Alex over a number of years and playing alongside him in the national team I am happy that he has broken the long-standing NSL appearance record. He is one of the true gentlemen of football and he deserves the accolades that go with this record."
Lee Sterrey – Newcastle United
"Alex was not only a fantastic player for his club and country but was also one of the true gentleman of the game. I really respect him as a player and a person and his professionalism is a good example for any youngsters to follow."
David Mitchell - Parramatta Power
"Our game on Saturday night against Eastern Pride in Bathurst was a special one for Alex as an individual and also the team as a whole. He will be remembered in Australian soccer for a long time to come."
Branko Culina - Sydney Olympic
"He has been a credit to the game in Australia. The way he conducts himself on the field as well as off it, is a credit to him as a player and as a person. He is a terrific role model for any aspiring young soccer player and I can't think of anyone more deserving to break this record."
Adelaide City Force - Zoran Matic.
"I remember when I first met him, he was just a tall, gangly player with no muscle on him. He started as a left fullback but once he moved into a more central role, he made the position his own. I still rate him one of the best headers of the ball I have seen.
He would take any criticism that I threw at him and go out and prove me wrong the next time. His leadership qualities were evident very early on and it was no surprise that he went on to lead his country with distinction."

Canterbury list first teamers

By Marc Barnett

FOLLOWING a no-show by the majority of Canterbury Marrickville players following the axing of coach Jim Patikas a large number of that team is refusing to play for the club and many players have requested a release.

Both Fernando Pelligrino and Paul Gaffney, who were on loan from other clubs, have been granted a release.

Club administrator Laki Konistis said: "Any player who does not have an exclusion clause in their contract and does not wishes to play and train for Canterbury Marrickville will be placed on the transfer list with the sum of $10,000 placed on their heads.

"The players who do this, then must wait for another club to agree to terms with Canterbury Marrickville and pay the requested transfer fee, or sit out the season until their contract are expired".

Konistis has also explained how he has contacted all other clubs in the Premier League to let them know of the current situation.

"I have spoken to all other Premier League clubs and they are supporting Canterbury Marrickville," he said.

"All clubs agree that they don't want trouble makers like this in their clubs".

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Enquiries will be treated in the strictest of confidence and written letters of interest, including a CV, should be sent by 15th December to;
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SuperSoccer VACANCIES

Do you have an interest in developing your writing or photography skills, are you an experienced writer looking for a new outlet, do you have a passion for the round ball game, would you like to join *SuperSoccer's* team?

SuperSoccer is currently expanding its team and has several vacancies. Previous applicant may re-apply.

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Note that they could well lead to paid, part time or full time positions.

Positions 3-7 require work to be submitted via email and to a strict deadline. Applications, in writing, should be made by Friday 15th December.

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Central Coast's Shaun Matthews

North Power Stadium confusion

LAST weekend the NSW Premier league was thrown into confusion when the match between Central Coast and Blacktown City was re-scheduled for Woy Woy after an eleventh hour notice arrived that the surface at Gosford's North Power Stadium is being re-surfaced.

Australia is due to play a series there next year but the state of the pitch has caused a lot of comment from within the game.

At the last moment the Central Coast home tie was switched to Blacktown's Gabbie Stadium, throwing the league into further confusion.

And now Northern Spirit have announced that they will play their round 13 National Soccer League match against Canberra Cosmos at North Sydney Oval on January 5, 2001.

The fixture was originally set down for North Power Stadium, Gosford on January 6, 2001.

Due to earlier problems with the surface at North Power Stadium an inspection showed the state of the pitch had deteriorated further and would not be fit to host a National Soccer League match in three week's time.

Northern Spirit Coach Graham Arnold, Director of Football Bill Collins and North Sydney Oval curator Peter Devlin met officials from North Power Stadium in Gosford on Wednesday morning and a decision was made to move the fixture.

"North Power Stadium is in no fit state to play a National Soccer League match," Collins said.

"The surface is worse than it was when we played up there a month ago and it wasn't good enough then. If they want to attract top quality sport they need to prepare a top quality surface.

"It is a shame for the people of the Central Coast but the ground was not fit to play an NSL game so we have had to move the match."

Brookvale Oval was considered as a venue for the match but Northern Spirit officials decided to return to North Sydney Oval.

"We want to build a strong history and affinity with North Sydney Oval, which is our home," said Northern Spirit General Manager Colin Mitchell. "Our fans like North Sydney Oval and we will have a long history there so we decided to bring the match back to North Sydney Oval."

Langdon makes sure he is noticed where it counts

By Bruce Campbell

MATTHEW Langdon isn't built like a traditional footballer and certainly he isn't built like a rugby league player.

Instead the pint-size midfielder is maybe the kind of player that you wouldn't notice at the local shopping mall.

But on the pitch he is something different.

In his two and a bit seasons at Northern Spirit Langdon has progressed well to the stage where he is now looked upon as one of the influential players each week.

That surprises him.

"It was a bit of a shock when I read the early season press," says the 20-year-old.

"I hadn't seen myself as a playmaker or anything like that so I was a bit surprised."

With Chi Chi Mendez crossing town to Sydney Olympic and Robbie Slater out of action with a serious foot injury that has given Langdon a chance to shine.

Langdon is making the most of it, including his period in the spotlight.

Especially so in the cruel world of professional football where fame can be fleeting.

With many players the temptation of plotting an overseas career follows a few scrapbook headlines.

Langdon is a bit more down to earth than that and while he wouldn't mind the opportunity to play his club football at the highest possible level he makes no secret of the fact that he is more than happy at North Sydney.

"I'm really happy at Spirit," he says.

"The financial input of Glasgow Rangers has been a real bonus for us all and it is a great club.

"I don't sit around and think about playing overseas, instead I just want to get on with my game each week for the club.

"If the opportunity came up then who knows.

"Like every player I'd also like to play for Australia as well but must now it's a case of getting on with it at Spirit and doing my best so that the coach picks me every week."

CARLTON v PERTH

Soccer Australia announced on Friday, that last Sunday's Round 10 National Soccer League match between Carlton and Perth Glory scheduled for Epping Stadium, was postponed.

The decision was made by Soccer Australia, following a recommendation for postponement by the National Soccer League Executive.

Following Carlton entering into Voluntary Administration last week, the Administrator advised earlier this afternoon, that he had not yet been able to guarantee funds to stage the match.

Additionally, there was in the view of Soccer Australia, uncertainty about the Administrator being in a position to meet the guarantees being sought by the APFA by 5pm on Monday 18 December.

These issues, together with the exposure of players to possible injury, the costs which Perth Glory and the NSL would incur, and the surrounding uncertainty of the relevance of the match result beyond Monday, were significant enough for the postponement to be made.

NSL General Manager, Stefan Kamasz said "Once again, a great deal of uncertainty surrounds the club and its ability to go forward beyond Monday.

"Under the circumstances, the decision of the Board of Soccer Australia, with the support of the NSL Executive, is the most appropriate option," he said.

Anderton interest could spell Okon end at 'Boro

By Damian Spellman

THE career of Australian Paul Okon could well be hanging by a thread after Middlesbrough brought in Terry Venables to battle away from the relegation zone.

Okon has only played a total of 173 minutes prior to last weekend—despite starring for Australia against Scotland recently.

His career has been plagued by injuries, rarely allowing the world to see the best out of this immensely talented midfielder.

But Socceroo coach Frank farina has shown a preference fro Okon to TSV Munich star Ned Zelic, fuelling a spat between the two which became public and caused Zelic to walk out of the national team plans.

New Middlesbrough coach Terry Venables knows the talents of Okon well enough from his tempestuous spell as boss of Australia's national team.

But he has hinted he could enter the race for England midfielder Darren Anderton's signature if he becomes available on a free transfer.

That could be the end for Okon.

The 28-year-old Anderton, who is currently enjoying a relatively injury-free spell at Tottenham, is out of contract at the end of the season and will be able to start talking to prospective employers in the New Year.

And while Venables, who has worked with Anderton at both Spurs and during his time as England boss, has made no move as yet for a player he regards highly, he admits he could well be interested as he attempts, along with Bryan Robson, to resurrect the Teessiders' fortunes.

"Everybody knows what a keen admirer I am of Darren from my time at Spurs and as England coach," he said.

"There has been no contact with the club but I would be interested in the player if he was available on a free transfer.

"In fact, a number of clubs would be interested because he is a talented player.

"It's always difficult talking about other people's players, but I'm a fan of Darren Anderton in a big way and Bryan Robson likes him as well.

"I'm sure there will be a lot of people interested in Darren Anderton.

"You're always looking to strengthen and we are no different, but we've not actually made it a priority because we know we've got a strong squad if we can quickly get the injured players back," he said.

"But that doesn't mean we're not looking, and if something came up the answer, as I said before when I first came here, to what would we be able to add to the staff football-wise would be 'we'll do our best', and I'm sure that's what they'll do.

"Keith Lamb and the chairman basically said the same thing at the same time - 'we will do our best'.

"What that means I don't know, but they will do their best.

"Rather than saying a figure, if we wanted something they would try.

"At the moment we haven't looked into that, but like every club we're aware of who's available.

"You get a million phone calls every week - I'd forgotten how time consuming the phone calls are."

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NSW Football History

Winds of change swept through Foundation Clubs

1957 WAS a milestone in the history of Australian football. In that year a new organisation appeared, the New South Wales Soccer Federation, offering a platform for the many new clubs which had been formed since the massive waves of European migration hit Australia in the early years of that decade.

The breakaway from the NSWSA quickly gained ground and staged its first ever tournament, a knockout called the Kennard Cup.

Hakoah beat Lane Cove United 5-1 in the final at Lidcombe Oval in front of an attendance of 4,200.

This competition was soon to be re-named the Federation Cup and continued for many years as a major pre-season tournament.

The league competition in that first year was well attended, a big increase on spectator figures under the old Soccer Association and justified the breakaway.

Canterbury Marrickville, under the coaching of Joe Vlasits, won the league premiership that year but went down in a thrilling Grand Final at the old Sydney Sportsground to Auburn.

The scoreline was 4-3 and it reflected how close the two teams had been all year, the league only going to Canterbury on goal difference.

The first Grand Final held by the breakaway Federation was packed full of controversy.

With only 13 minutes left on the clock Canterbury were crusing to a 3-1 win - then Len Quested started the biggest comeback of all.

With the two sides now locked at 3-3, Jack Knott got the winner just three minutes before full time.

The other two teams in the inaugural Top 4 were Bankstown and Gladesville Ryde.

Interestingly only Canterbury is playing in top flight football today, although the club has undergone many changes and later amalgamated to form Canterbury-Marrickville Olympic.

In those 1957 days Canterbury were a 'true blue' club, as were Auburn and ironically it was the non-mono ethnic clubs which held the upper hand in playing success at the outset, despite the fact that the breakaway league had been fuelled by the desire to include the so-called ethnic clubs like Hakoah, Prague and Sydney Austral.

Twenty years later when the National Soccer League was formed only Apia and Hakoah had retained unbroken Division 1 membership.

Along the way there had been many casualties: Prague amalgamated with Yugal in 1973 and were then relegated in 1975, Canterbury were relegated in 1964 and enjoyed a yo-yo existence later on amalgamating to reflect their new Greek-Australian backing; Auburn were relegated in 1963 although they later regained Division 1 status but again were absorbed by other interests: Bankstown were relegated in 1964; Concord only survived three seasons in the top flight, going down in 1959; Eastern Suburbs were absorbed into Hakoah after that first season; Gladesville-Ryde were also relegated, in 1960; Lane Cove dropped out after the first year; and Sydney Australia were relegated in 1961 and then amalgamated with Inter Suburban side Western Suburbs before rising again and later on enjoying foundation membership of the NSL.

Of the 'survivors' it is interesting, and particularly with the topic of NSL reconstruction all the vogue, to note that not one of those foundation clubs remains in an unaltered state.

The winds of change even blew through such one-time stalwarts as Apia, who are a different legal entity from the Leichhardt Tigers of today, even although there is a strong link in both the support base, background and home ground at Lambert Park.

Another interesting feature of that year's competition was that Gladesville-Ryde were only included after the completion of Round 5.

Reader Jim Jones who supplied much of the detail for this article tells us that they then staged catch-up games by playing on Saturdays and Sundays—and still made the Top 4.

Jim also says: "In winning the premiership Canterbury received £100, Auburn paid its players £3 per match.

"Canterbury reserve grade had an outstanding 16-year-old prospect who scored 55 goals—John Watkiss.

"Guess who went on to appear in more State League Grand Finals than anyone else?"

Watkiss's first Grand Final was the following year when the youngster was part of a side which reversed the 1957 result, this time beating Auburn 2-1.

Three other sides made up the competition for the following year—Corrimal United (a new side formed after Corrimal Rangers decided not to join the 'breakaway' NSWSF), North Side and Villawood.

Bruce Campbell

Bruce Campbell

TALKING FOOTBALL

THE farewell given to ousted Olyroo coach Raul Blanco marks the final parting with Australia's old guard.

There are some who will say, about time, and there will be others for whom the change brings a deal of sadness.

Raul Blanco is a fine human being and an excellent coach.

But he was also a part of the triumvirate of Thomson-Scheinflug-Blanco which to some became a symbol of what was bad about the game.

And even although Les Scheinflug is still on the payroll as Technical Advisor his importance is much diminished.

Like Blanco, he too had his critics within the national system and the media.

I doubt whether many will pause for one moment to reflect on the magnificent job that Eddie Thomson and his two assistants did for Australian football.

Since 1975, when Rale Rasic was sensationally dumped as Aussie coach, our international fortunes had been at a low ebb.

Thomson restored a pride in wearing the Green and Gold.

He abandoned the 'cap for everyone' policy of some of his predecessors and instead welded a team together which was capable of bottling the game up and at the same time breaking free to rampage at will.

Who will forget the awesome might of the Socceroos against Canada in the first half of the 1993 qualifier at the Sydney Football Stadium?

Or of the majestic Socceroos as they first took on then stood up to the wounded pride of Argentina and Maradona?

Yet Thomson was panned by some of our media 'experts' for being defensive.

While I have always been a harsh critic of his decision not to play David Mitchell from the outset of that game I wonder in disbelief at anyone who could call a side with the likes of Robbie Slater and Aurelio Vidmar anything but stylish.

That Thomson also played cautiously is obvious, but he did bring some terrific results to a team and also invented the concept of the much vaunted 'Europeroos'.

So Raul has now gone to pave the way for a more successful era.

Another coach bites the dust because the soccer politicians play games.

That isn't to say that I don't wholeheartedly support Frank Farina and his attempt at taking Australia to new heights.

But I know Eddie, Les and Raul well enough to also know that they will be amongst his biggest supporters.

For theirs is a genuine love of football in this country.

It isn't a game of stacking up the numbers for a crucial election.

And as we sail towards Christmas 2000 I'll put my last cynical thought for the year; when did a chairman or committee member ever resign because a coach performed below the required level?

Has anyone ever known a club or national boss to sep down after appointing a coach?

After all someone has to take the ultimate responsibility.

But too often it is the coach or the players who are laid out on the sacrificial alter, blamed for some apparent lack of success—and never once does anyone question those who made the appointment in the first place.

In all the words written about Raul Blanco this last week never once have I read of the journalist who questioned those who appointed him.

As I said, my last cynical thought for the year.

And on that note I would certainly like to wish Raul Blanco all of the very best.

He is a fine gentleman whom I have had the pleasure of interviewing in both print and radio many, many times.

I hope there are many more ahead of both of us.

WHY not drop SuperSoccer a line? You don't have to agree, just make your point on any matter relating to football.

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The Carlton fiasco:
jolly boys not really on the ball

SHOULD Carlton have been allowed to stay in the NSL after pulling out of their game against Adelaide?

Personally, I don't think so, but then the game isn't about my personal opinions.

Let's look at it a bit closer and see if there is any sensible reason for any club to pull out of any fixture.

Illness, poor weather, selection in national teams and Acts of God are all legitimate reasons for not playing.

Not wanting to pay the players doesn't rate in that list.

Carlton didn't play that fixture and instead I had the opportunity of listening to Ian Knop on SBS's *On The Ball* saying how sorry for Peter Jess at Carlton, what a good guy he was etc etc.

Peter Jess is a grown adult who knows how hard it is to make it in sport.

He has done just that, and then some.

But Carlton won't rate amongst his list of successes.

But he took the decision not to play the fixture and the NSL should have reacted accordingly.

The committee of which Ian Knop is vice chairman should have stood up to be counted and dumped them then and there.

It would have spared us all of a week's media reports featuring gold grabbers desperate for an extra ounce of free publicity hard on the backs of the misfortunes of the players and fans.

They are the ones I feel sorry, not Peter Jess.

The fans are the ones who forked out their hard-earned cash to cheer on a really good team and the players are the ones who are just trying to feed their families and themselves by earning an income.

This is supposed to be professional sport yet out top administrators are behaving like it is some kind of jolly-boy party—and the worst part is that fine shows like *On The Ball* are actually giving it air time.

We couldn't do it without you

THIS is our last issue before Xmas, and the last of the year 2000. So far it has been a whirlwind re-entry into Australian football after a one-year plus lay-off following the sale of our *Inside Soccer* publication.

I'd like to thank everybody who has shown faith in us to do the job, to Peter Gray and his board at NSWSF and CEO Robert Waddell for their support, the many journalists and contributors who have already spent countless hours trying to increase the coverage of Australian football and to the many, many club officials who get behind us every week.

Naturally we couldn't have produced these eight issues without the support of our advertisers but then we wouldn't have done it at all without you, our readers.

A trip to our Sydney-based distributor last week proved that we are on the right track.

We have just added another 200 or so newsagents on our regular weekly delivery.

And with sales figures rocketing way past our old *Inside Soccer* mark we are getting back to the sort of figures that *SuperSoccer* is capable of achieving.

That already makes us the biggest selling football publication in the premier state but it also sets us a hard yardstick for next year; 2001 is a year when we will improve every aspect of *SuperSoccer* in terms of size, editorial coverage, range and distribution.

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FOOTBALL in ILLAWARRA

Helensburgh Thistle maybe oldest club in Australia

By Bruce Campbell

FOOTBALL in Illawarra is almost as old as the game in Australia itself.

The region has a background in coal mining, something which brought large amounts of Scots to the NSW coastal area, and with them they brought their passion for the round ball game.

One of Australia's oldest clubs, and quite possibly the oldest in continuous existence, is Helensburgh Thistle.

Formed in 1885, Thistle have played variously in the Sydney and Illawarra competitions.

With the rise in popularity of the game in New South Wales continuing the NSW British Foootball Association was formed in 1898 to administer the game.

Other clubs in the region which have similar claims for longevity include Bulli, Woonona (the history of these two clubs is very intertwined with the original Woonona-Bulli being formed in 1889), Balgownie (1890) and Corrimal (1891).

Corrimal Rangers subsequently became Northern United which now plays in the Illawarra Premier League while one of the first formed clubs in the Illawarra was the Balgownie Rangers, formed in 1883.

The current Balgownie, coached by former Wolves and Port Kembla stalwart Jock Morlando, play at Judy Masters Park, named after one of their all time greats.

In the 1950s Corrimal Rangers were the side in Australian football and included a dazzling array of big name stars such as Bobby Bignall and Ted Drain.

In the old days of the NSW Soccer Association clubs from the South Coast also regularly competed in the top flight and this trend continued into the NSW Federation competitions.

Balgownie's coach, Jock Morlando, the ex Wolves and Port Kembla star

In the early 1960s an amalgam of these local clubs was formed as South Coast United, playing their home games out of Woonona Park.

The ground was later sold for a housing development but one of the conditions of the sale was that the football pitch be relocated and Balls Paddock is now the home of Bulli Soccer Club.

Today football is played at all levels in Illawarra; the Wollongong City Wolves, the current Australian champions, play in the NSL, while Illawarra Lions play in the NSW State League.

The Illawarra Soccer Association, which is affiliated to the NSWSF, conducts two semi pro leagues, the elite Illawarra Premier League and the First Division.

The Wollongong & District Amateur Association conducts the amateur leagues while the Leisure Coast League conducts a social Sunday league.

Junior football is also strong with 8,000 or so registered members.

Major Trophies won by Illawarra clubs

NEW SOUTH WALES
METROPOLITAN PREMIERSHIP
1928 Balgownie
NSW SOCCER ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIP
1926 Balgownie
1943 Corrimal Rangers
1956 Corrimal Rangers
NSW SOCCER FEDERATION CHAMPIONSHIP
Pre NSL
1963 South Coast United
Post NSL
1987 Wollongong City
1990 Wollongong Macedonia (Illawarra Lions)
NSW SOCCER FEDERATION PREMIERSHIP
Pre NSL
1958 Corrimal United
1965 South Coast United
1969 South Coast United

NSW GARDINER CUP
1928 Thirroul
STATE LEAGUE CUP
1947 Corrimal Rangers
1954 Corrimal Rangers

NATIONAL
NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP
2000 Wollongong City Wolves
NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE PREMIERSHIP
1988 Wollongong City Wolves

BOBBY BIGNALL: one of the legends of Illawarra soccer. He captained Australia and Corrimal Rangers and made 20 appearances for his country including the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. Not big physically he was nevertheless an immense figure in the game. He retired prematurely in 1957 when Corrimal Rangers did not enter the NSWSF's new breakaway professional league.

They made history .....
1928 NSWSA GARDINER STATE CUP FINAL
Thirroul 3 Pyrmont 0
Venue Bodes Ground, Wollongong
Thirroul: FE Chilby, C Taylor, H Mitchell, WG Casso, Gowans, C Orr, J Seath, E Love, R Griffiths, J Hamilton, Rhodes

They made history .....
1963 SOUTH WALES SOCCER FEDERATION GRAND FINAL
SOUTH COAST UNITED 4 (Johnston 2, Brownlie, o.g.)
APIA 0
Referee: A Boskovic
Venue: Sportsground
Att: 30,158 - a new Australian club match record
SCU: Billington, Salisbury, J Harris, Ringland, Kelly, Tolson, B Harris, M Johnson, Brownlie, Barnett, Patterson.

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Port Kembla's star

By Bruce Campbell

IN Illawarra the name of Adrian Alston has a touch of magic about it.

In short he has been there and done that—and then some.

He exudes confidence and little wonder; practically everything he has done on the football field has turned to gold

The one omission from that is his time spent as coach of Wollongong Wolves

"Budget," he asks, "what budget" on the rare occasions he talks about that time.

"We just didn't have any money whatsoever

"I couldn't sign anyone because we had nothing to pay them with."

At the end of a miserable season in 1985 Alston was made the scapegoat and was shown the door

Since then various Wolves boards have ignored the obvious talents of a man who oozes talent and class.

But down at suburban Primbee they aren't that bothered.

Instead Port Kembla are delighted that the Wolves loss is the Zebras gain.

For Alston has turned his club into a prize winning machine

Even last season when long serving captain Giacomo Morlando departed for Balgownie taking with him Kane Maccabei the Zebras just kept on picking up silverware.

"It was hard last season," says Alston.

"We lost so many players but in the end we came out on top.

"The players have got used to winning.

"We had a few problems early on and I only had Ian Pollan for four games in the whole season.

"Mineo Bonetig was also out injured for a long spell after he got a fractured cheek.

"But even in our last game against Albion Park our class showed.

"They had to win the game to stay up in the Premier League while we had to win take out the league premiership.

"At half time we were down 1-0 but I said a few things at half time, changed a few things around and in the first twenty minutes of the second half we destroyed them.

"In the end it was 5-1."

Alston's side won the Grand Final against Olympic 2-0 in a game which they dominated from start to finish.

That brought as much satisfaction to the Socceroo icon as any of the other 14 trophies in his eight years at Port.

Along that road he has won no less than five championships—and never had a goal scored against them in a Grand Final

Even the championship they lost in 1998 was on a penalty shoot out after they had tied their game in extra time with Wollongong White Eagles

Next season the stars for Port Kembla on the park could well be Nick Polimenakos, currently on loan to NSW Premier League club St George, Bonetig and Zvonko Uselbrjka.

But the real star is the man off it, Adrian Alston

The master coach doesn't feel that he has outgrown the ISA Premier league, far from it, despite the fact that next season may be their last in that league.

It is no secret in the game that the NSWSF have had discussions with them about becoming members of the newly formed summer Premier League.

Alston is pragmatic about that move

"It would be a challenge," he says, "but the club has to have everything right before they make that move.

"Too many clubs have gone up to a bigger league before they are ready.

"We have a great club at Port Kembla and a really good committee.

"The president, Emilio Salucci is a hard working man who really has the game at heart and he knows that we have to be ready on the field and off it."

But currently Port Kembla are shackled by an archaic ISA ruling which prevents them from signing only one player from outside the district.

By the ISA's interpretation of that ruling that means that a player like Andy Ravanello, who has played with Port consistently over the last few seasons, is ruled as an 'outsider' because he is now with NSL Canberra Cosmos while Sydney-based Nick Polimenakos is a 'local'

Similarly Useljbkra is classed as an 'import', despite living and being developed in the district, because he was signed from Sydney United

The classy striker is the club's only allowed 'import' for next season

That kind of restriction may eventually be the catalyst for Port Kembla to move into the NSW Premier League to achieve their true potential.

If it is it will put Adrian Alston back on a bigger stage also

And that can be no bad thing for a game screaming out for personalities.

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Not a summer holiday

By Bryan Cokely

HARD work and patience has paid off for Englishman Max Nicolson as he savoured the fruits of five weeks hard labour with the signing of a contract last week, with the Wollongong Wolves until the end of the season

Five weeks would seem a long time to wait for a player with his background, but by his own admission Nicolson was not fit when he arrived on the south coast from the Woodlands club in Singapore.

Hailing from the same northern English seaside town of Hull as Stuart Young, the pair have played together before at English Division 3 side Scunthorpe, and in Singapore.

Spells at Hereford United and Doncaster Rovers, also lower league English sides, complete Nicolson's C.V.

Whilst at Doncaster he had the good fortune to be coached by Scottish legends Dave MacKay and Billy Bremner and later by the highly successful former Wimbledon coach Joe Kinnear

Now 28 and standing 1.8 metres tall and weighing in at 80kg, Nicolson is solidly built and describes himself as an all round left footed midfield

player who relies on work rate and stamina rather than speed, but also likes to get forward in support of attacking play

At most clubs a left foot is a distinct advantage but at the Wolves Nicolson will be accorded no immediate favour over fellow left footers Alvin Ceccoli, Scott Chipperfield and Dino Menillo

The pace of training sessions has impressed the amenable Englishman.

The heat and humidity in Singapore demanded a slower pace in games but Nicolson admits that the standard there was not good

The Wollongong style is a lot closer to the way he worked at home and this pleases him.

Nicolson's immediate ambition is to win a first team place at the Wolves and impress coach Ron Corry enough to earn an extension to his current contract to realize his second ambition: to play in the world Club Championships in Spain, if the Wolves qualify ,through the Oceania group.

"My ambition is to play in the World Club Championships without a doubt," he says. It would be a dream come true to play against the likes of Real Madrid.

"I'm hoping Man Utd will get there as I have always supported them.

"The lads back home will go crazy if Stuart and I get there.

"But the lads have got to win the qualifiers first."

Having moved into a Wollongong apartment with his partner, Katy Berry, Nicolson is settled and feels very welcome in the down to earth Wollongong atmosphere, where hard work and determination are revered more than flash in the pan show-offs

His two outings in the Youth team have given him some match conditioning and he understands that his future dreams will only be realised with solid effort and focus.

At his age Nicolson has been handed a golden opportunity and his realisation of this is apparent

Nicolson is not here for a holiday.

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1988 IN REFLECTION

The first champions to not win the league

By Bryan Cokely

THE achievements of the current Wollongong City team are well known following the heroics in the second half of last season's dramatic Grand Final in Perth against the Glory.

But just over a decade earlier the Wolves had a most successful period under coach John Fleming, who in three seasons took the Wolves from cellar dwellers to the top of the National Soccer League in 1988 when they finished first in the league table after one of the tightest finishes ever

Fleming's era began when he was appointed coach to replace Adrian Alston at the cash strapped Wolves for the 1986 season

Wollongong finished 8th in Fleming's debut year as an N S.L. coach but were relegated under the rules of a complex formula in yet another league re-shuffle

The following year Wollongong blitzed the 1997 N.S W State League, finishing as double champions of the league and play-off series, confirming that the Wolves deserved N S.L. status

Unfortunately the Wollongong board had not been quite as optimistic as the playing staff and the win bonus payments were a heavy burden, which meant the Wolves jumped into bed with entrepreneur Harry Michaels for the 1988 season

Initially it was rosy as Michaels' cash allowed Fleming to bring in Danny Crainie, David Skeen, David Ratchffe and the returning Ray Vlietstra from Sydney Croatia.

As part of the deal Michaels was allowed to bring in guest players, internationals Alan Brazil, Trevor Francis and Paul Mariner.

Mariner and Francis played three games each, home and away before smallish crowds.

Brazil followed his initial stint with an extended return, which unfortunately finished before the end of the season, when an increasingly erratic Harry Michaels withdrew his support.

Typically, Michaels wanted more say in team selections for his financial outlay

This caused tremendous pressure for Fleming at the time who was not a great fan of another of Michaels' late season signings, Socceroo Marshall Soper.

Michaels was outraged that Fleming did not see Soper as his first choice striker preferring Robbie Giraldi, Pat Brodnik, and Randel Easthorpe, people whom he trusted to give everything for a common cause.

Back in 1985 Fleming had come to the attention of the Wollongong board after coming within a whisker of taking suburban Fairy Meadow into the N.S L.

The core of that side followed Fleming across to the Wolves.

Goalkeeper Warwick Young, defender Jock Morlando, striker Robbie Giraldi and defender Reg Chilby were all locals with the right attitude to make a success of their step up in standard.

From the beginning Fleming looked for players with character first and other qualities second, as he knew that hard work and team spirit would be the ingredients for success

To the surprise of many he released those that he felt did not fit the mould.

Quality players such as Bernie Godzik Alex Bundalo and David Batten never stayed or were left on the sidelines.

"The difference with the team I had was the quality of the people", said Fleming.

"We were not the best side but we were the side with the best character.

"As such it was an easy team to coach.

"Everyone had pride and a well-directed ego.

"I have never been able to find a group of players like that since.

"Wherever we played we played with passion.

"Everyone was so positive."

As such in three seasons Wollongong became a team that had the respect of their peers.

People like Adelaide city coach Zoran Matic had the highest regard for the achievements of the Wolves under Fleming

It was not always the case with the media, in particular SBS's Les Murray who had contempt for the direct play of the Wolves.

To the bitter end Murray only gave scant praise and provided wind to the myth that it was the guest players that were doing all the winning for an otherwise limited side

As Fleming points out; "we were written off after a 2-1 away defeat to South Melbourne but people forget we played the last nine games without Alan Brazil and only lost once

"We played to our strengths, we had good quality wide men at fullback and wing, plenty of movement up front and midfielders who would chase anything down.

"The other coaches respected us tremendously because we had all 11 men play committed football every week."

The 1988 season was the first in which the team finishing on top of the ladder would not be regarded as champions.

History does not record Wollongong as either champions or runners up.

But surprisingly Fleming is not bitter or hurt at the lack of recognition at the time and since.

"It's only a memory... people cherish different things," he says.

"I cherish the camaraderie and things like the bus trips after away games, everyone was so positive, even after I gave them a bollocking after training."

But it was a fantastic season for those involved as scalp after scalp was claimed, against overconfident opposition.

The final game away to Sydney Croatia was drama packed.

Croatia needed a win, Wollongong a win or a draw and South Melbourne needed to win away to Adelaide City

Wollongong led 1-0 until the dying moments at Edensor Park when Croatia equalised for a 1-1 draw

The atmosphere after the game was tense, as Adelaide had kicked off an hour late and conflicting news reports filtered through

When the result came, scenes of jubilation filled the dressing rooms until exhaustion took over

There were tears, laughter and an immense sense of achievement and pride.

For many in the room it was the greatest day in their careers

The Finals series were a huge let down.

Injury and suspension had depleted the team at the wrong time.

A scoreless draw against Croatia at 'neutral' Marconi was highlighted by a Peter Kotaminidis header, cleared from behind the line by Croatia's Alan Hunter.

Hunter admitted as much after the game and it was Croatia who went into the Grand Final on penalties.

A rejuvenated Marconi led by Frank Farina wrapped up the other grand final spot when they defeated a flagging Wollongong at 'neutral' Edensor Park

Marconi won the Grand Final to be the first champions by winning the Finals series of Games

They had finished fourth in the regular season

But to anyone around at the time the first past the post were the true winners.

To this day that is still the case with Fleming who defiantly said. "Whoever finishes first are the champions

"People now are satisfied with finishing 6th and that is not a good approach to playing the game".

Brandon Park has gone: official

By Otto Bader

BRANDON Park was intended to be the home of South Coast football but is now lost forever, and that is official

Originally a dump, community lobbying of government and local council opened it up for sports use.

Football wasn't allowed to use Wollongong Showground (now Wollongong Stadium) and eventually the sport had its own home at Brandon Park.

Much labor of love was needed to establish proper facilitates and many volunteers spent endless hours at the ground, even marking out the field for every match and putting up the nets.

The Wollongong Sports Ground Trust was never interested in Brandon Park and instead concentrated on the Showground.

According to a press release the Government has struck a deal with the WSGT worth around $10million.

A local TV station will also help to finance the improvements.

Acting NSW Premier Andrew Refshauge says that Wollongong Stadium will be upgraded to international requirements including the extra seating demand by the National Rugby League, the other tenants of the ground.

Meanwhile Brandon Park is to be transformed into a high-tech business centre by the University of Wollongong.

The exact modifications to be carried out at Wollongong Stadium are still to be worked out by the WSGT which still has considerable debts to service.

Blanco pays a heavy price

LAST week Soccer Australia announced that they would not renew the contract of Olympic coach Raul Blanco after he led the host nation to losses in all three of their matches at the Sydney Games.

Blanco said he had no regrets.

He did not dwell on how his preparations were hampered by the unavailability of Leeds United striker Harry Kewell because of injury, or how key midfielder Paul Okon had broken his foot playing for Middlesbrough.

Ned Zelic opted to stay in Germany and when Leeds United's summer signing from Celtic, Mark Viduka, finally arrived, two days before the tournament started on September 13, he failed to score in three matches.

"The cruel reality of it is you are there to do a job and sometimes the results do not go your way," Blanco said.

"You only have regrets when you have not given your best and I have always given my best.

"Results are what keep people in jobs and what don't keep people in jobs."

Australia lost to Italy 1-0, Nigeria 3-2 and Honduras 2-1 to finish at the foot of Group A.

Blanco has been part of the Australian national coaching system since 1981.

He was in charge of the Olympic team for four years and was assistant coach of the national team from 1989 to 1999.

"I met with Raul and we discussed the positioning of the Olympic team," Scarsella said.

"Realistically, given the time frames ahead of us, and the fact that Raul is very much an active-team

coach, we both agreed that this was the best course of action for both parties.

"Raul has been instrumental in the national set-up for a long time, so the parting will naturally be a sad one for both him, and Soccer Australia, and we thank him for his very valuable contribution, and wish him all the best for the future."

Blanco said it had been "an incredible journey for me, both professionally and personally.

"To have been associated with the Australian national teams as a coach has been a unique experience for me, and one that I will never forget," Blanco said.

"Football is my life and I cannot see myself being inactive, therefore at this stage of my career, it's time to look forward to my next challenge."

And there is no doubt at all that has paid the ultimate price for Australia's disappointing 2000 Olympic campaign.

The writing was on the wall for Blanco after he accepted full responsibility for the Australian soccer team's poor performance in Sydney in which they failed to win a single game.

Scarsella described the split as amicable saying both parties agreed this was "the best course of action".

Australia's preparation for the 2004 Olympic Games is not expected to suffer with the immediate concentration being on the senior squad's campaign for the 2002 World Cup.

SA said Australia's preparations for the 2004 Athens Games were not expected to begin for at least another 12 months.

A successor to Blanco has not yet been named but Socceroos coach Frank Farina has long expressed the desire to combine his current position with the Olyroos role.

Raul Blanco has enjoyed a distinguished career within the ranks of the National Teams Coaching system since 1981.

Among his achievements, Blanco was in charge of the Australian Olympic Men's Football Team from 1997 through to the conclusion of the 2000 Campaign, and was also the Assistant Senior National Team Coach from 1989 to 1999, including caretaker coach of the Socceroos for two periods, October through December 1996, and July 1998 to July 1999.

ALF GALUSTIAN: THE MAN AT THE TOP OF COERVER

During his yearly visit to Australia, *SuperSoccer* managed to catch up with the International Director of COERVER Coaching, Alf Galustian.

SuperSoccer: Alf, to people not directly involved in COERVER Coaching, it remains a concept hard to define beyond one or two sentences.

Coming straight from the man at the top, what is COERVER Coaching?

Alf Galustian: COERVER is two things.

One, it is a teaching method that focuses on individual soccer skills for children aged 7-17.

Two, it is the biggest global grassroots soccer education business, spread via products (videos, books and manuals), services (camps, school visits and events) and promotions (websites such as www.soccernsw.com.au/coervercoaching.html).

To expand on point one, every teaching method has a curriculum.

In COERVER, the curriculum is based upon the Pyramid Player Development, of which there are six building blocks.

6) Ball Mastery through unbroken repetitive exercises and using both feet. The direct benefits from this most important of stages include improved ball control, improved coordination and improved flexibility.

5) Receiving and Passing.

4) One versus One in attack and defence.

3) Speed with the ball and Speed without the ball.

2) Finishing-how to score more goals and

1) Group Play in attack and defence.

SuperSoccer: How wide is the global spread of COERVER and what is the essential reason for the dispersion of the teaching method?

Alf Galustian: COERVER is spread in two ways.

One, through materials such as videos and books, which by the way have been translated into eleven languages.

Secondly, COERVER has a physical presence in countries such as Australia, England, France, Japan, USA, Korea, China, Canada and Italy.

I think the effectiveness of COERVER lies in its adaptability.

It's fine for a Coach to teach kids at AC Milan where the level of ability across the group is fantastic.

But in reality most grassroots coaching sessions around the world involve teaching a group of kids with varying ability and this is much harder for a Coach to deal with.

Using COERVER, a Coach can apply Ball Mastery to kids with modest talent whereas exceptional young players will progress through the curriculum at a greater pace.

I must also add, that the worldwide support of ADIDAS over 17 years has helped the adoption of COERVER immensely.

SuperSoccer: How do children in Australia compare with children from elsewhere in terms of excelling in the principles of COERVER?

Alf Galustian: I've been coming here every year for the last five years and I would say that the kids in Sydney are as good as anywhere else.

I do stress to COERVER teachers in Australia and other countries that the goal for 99.9% of the kids is fun and then progress in individual skill development.

For the 0.01% of children with outstanding talent, the idea is progress in individual skills and then fun.

SuperSoccer: COERVER Coaching in Australia is implemented by the New South Wales Soccer Federation and its most famous graduate is Harry Kewell of Leeds United and Australia.

In your opinion, would Harry have reached where he is today if not for COERVER?

Alf Galustian: A player of Harry's talent is very rare and it's likely that he would have made the grade anyway.

Nevertheless, I read in a recent article in the English press that Harry acknowledges how important COERVER was to his development as a player.

Perhaps a better way to answer the question of "how effective is COERVER?" is to flip the point of reference.

Harry has great potential but hasn't achieved yet, what a player such as Jurgen Klinsmann has achieved.

Klinsmann is now retired and lives in sunny California.

Two weeks ago, Jurgen came to Japan, saw COERVER for the first time and concluded that COERVER would have made him a much better player.

Even though he's now retired, Jurgen takes out a soccer ball every day and practices elements of the pyramid.

When I say to people "COERVER is great and it will make you a much better player" a reply such as "who is Alf Galustian??" is more than justified.

But when COERVER is praised by legends of the game such as Klinsmann, Franz Beckenbauer, Bobby Robson, Franco Baresi and Aime Jacquet, one cannot help but sit up and take notice.

SuperSoccer: One of the reasons why you are in Australia is for a series of sessions to update the knowledge of local COERVER Coaches.

Does this imply that the principles of COERVER are not static and gathering dust in a textbook somewhere?

Alf Galustian: COERVER today isn't the same as COERVER ten years ago and will not be the same as COERVER in 2010.

Every year an element of COERVER is updated to keep it at the cutting edge of football education around the world.

SuperSoccer: Finally Alf, you live six months of the year in Japan, and live out of a suitcase for the remainder of the year to promote COERVER.

What drives you?

Alf Galustian: Football or COERVER is way down the scale compared to social issues such as poverty, hunger and disease.

But if I can help bring joy and happiness into the lives of millions of children around the world, then that's the satisfaction for me.

Interview by Binesh Mudaliar for Soccer NSW

SPOTLIGHT ON
Adrian Cervinski
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

The Knights are ninth on the league ladder (before last weekend's round) but only on goal difference. How do you feel the team has performed so far this season?

I think we're doing well.

It's a very young team but we're very close and we play for each other.

We've either been having a win or not getting any points at all but the teams we've lost to, perhaps with the exception of South Melbourne who beat us on a bad day where we had injuries, haven't played better than us, it's just been bad luck.

So I think we're a good chance to go Top Six.

What are the team's aspirations for the rest of the season? The club wants the team to finish in the Top Six but we think we can go all the way.

As I said before, there hasn't been a team that's really played better than us all season except South Melbourne, plus there have been surprise results throughout the NSL week in, week out which means any team that makes the finals has the chance to become champions.

So if we get into the Top Six, who knows?

As one of the senior players in the Knights line-up, how do you see yourself contributing to the team's ambitions for this season?

There are a couple of senior players at the club like Alex [Kiratzoglou], Ransford Banini and myself and it's really our job to keep encouraging the team because they're young.

We've played finals so we're able to tell the younger guys how great the experience is so they stay inspired and motivated to reach our aspirations of a top six finish.

Personally, I've set myself a target to be among the leading goal-scorers in the NSL at the end of the season but I'd rather the team be winning than for me to achieve a big goal tally.

It's also great for me to be playing with the younger guys and to watch them make the jump from the youth league to NSL level. Some of them are only 18 or 19 years old and to see them so excited about playing for the Knights spurs me on.

What are your plans beyond this season?

I'm contracted to the Knights until the end of the season and I'm not sure what will happen after that but if the team does well this season, it would be no use me going anywhere else because we have a lot of good, young players that could be a dominant force in the NSL for the next four or five years if the club can hold on to them.

Whatever happens, I think I've still got at least another five years in me as a player.

People say footballers hit their peak at 27 or 28 years old and I'm 27 now, so I think I've got a lot to offer for quite a while.

With acknowledgement to Soccer Australia.

SCOREBOARD

SOCCER NSW PREMIER LEAGUE

		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Blacktown City	7	6	1	0	15	4	19
2	Bonnyrigg	6	4	1	1	19	7	13
3	Belconnen	7	4	0	3	15	10	12
4	St George	6	3	1	2	11	11	10
5	Parramatta	6	3	1	2	12	13	10
6	Central Coast	7	3	0	4	8	8	9
7	Leichhardt	6	2	1	3	10	11	7
8	Canterbury	5	2	0	3	3	7	6
9	Sutherland	7	0	3	4	6	15	3
10	Penrith	7	0	2	5	5	18	2

PREMIER LEAGUE (Youth Grade)

		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Leichhardt	6	5	0	1	18	3	15
2	Blacktown City	6	4	1	1	16	9	13
3	Parramatta	6	3	3	0	10	7	12
4	Belconnen	7	4	0	3	18	16	12
5	Bonnyrigg	6	3	1	2	11	10	10
6	Central Coast	6	3	1	2	11	12	10
7	Sutherland	7	1	3	3	10	12	6
8	Canterbury	5	1	1	3	6	11	4
9	Penrith	7	0	3	4	7	16	3
10	St George	6	0	1	5	4	15	1

NYL (Northern Div)

		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	A.I.S.	10	9	0	1	27	8	27
2	Marconi Youth	8	6	1	1	13	3	19
3	Northern Spirit	8	6	1	2	20	7	18
4	Sydney United	8	5	1	2	17	11	17
5	Parramatta Power	8	5	1	2	21	13	16
6	Stallions Colts	8	4	0	4	20	11	12
7	Wollongong	7	3	2	2	14	10	11
8	N.S.W.I.S.	8	3	2	3	7	9	11
9	Newcastle United	8	3	1	4	10	8	10
10	Q.A.S.	11	3	1	7	18	31	10
11	Canberra Cosmos	8	2	3	3	15	15	9
12	Olympic Youth	7	2	1	4	14	18	7
13	Olympic Academy	9	1	1	7	10	19	4
14	Newcastle Colts	5	1	0	4	1	12	3
15	ACT Academy	8	1	0	8	3	34	3

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Sydney Olympic	10	6	2	2	17	9	20
2	Wollongong	10	6	2	2	19	13	20
3	South Melbourne	10	5	4	1	20	9	19
4	Perth Glory	9	5	2	2	18	9	17
5	Parramatta Power	10	5	1	4	16	13	16
6	Northern Spirit	10	3	5	2	13	9	14
7	Melbourne Knights	10	4	2	4	15	16	14
8	Carlton	8	3	4	1	13	9	13
9	Marconi Stallions	10	3	4	3	11	10	13
10	Adelaide City	9	4	1	4	12	16	13
11	Sydney United	10	3	3	4	13	20	12
12	Canberra Cosmos	10	3	2	5	18	19	11
13	Brisbane Strikers	10	2	4	4	13	17	10
14	Kingz	10	2	3	5	14	20	9
15	Newcastle Utd	10	1	4	5	6	19	7
16	Eastern Pride	10	0	3	7	11	21	3

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE ROUND 7

Canterbury 0	Belconnen 2
Penrith 0	St George 4
Leichhardt 3	Parramatta 6
Bonnynigg 1	Sutherland 1
Central Coast 0	Blacktown City 2

NSW PREMIER YOUTH LEAGUE ROUND 7

Canterbury 1	Belconnen 5
Penrith 1	St George 1
Leichhardt 0	Parramatta 1
Bonnyrigg 1	Sutherland 0

NSW Premier League

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE ROUND 10

Newcastle Utd 0	South Melbourne 0
Parramatta Power 2	Eastern Pride 0
Canberra Cosmos 2	Sydney Olympic 3
Brisbane Strikers 1	Kingz 1
Wollongong 2	Sydney United 0
Marconi Stallions 0	Adelaide City 2
Melbourne Knights 1	Northern Spirit 1
Carlton v Perth Glory (P/P)	

WOMEN'S NSL
Grand Final
Queensland Sting 1 NSW Sapphires 0

INTERNATIONAL TOUR
Wednesday 13 December
New Zealand School Girls 1
Australia School Girls 2

ASICS WNSL BIG MATCH REPORT

Bartlett strike secures WNSL title as Sapphires get stung in Brisbane

THE NSW Sapphires have finished runners-up to Queensland Sting in the 2000-2001 Women's National Soccer League (WNSL), losing 1-0 in the Grand Final played at Brisbane's Suncorp Metway Stadium on 16 December.

Matildas defender Traci Bartlett scored in the 55th minute to earn Queensland Sting its first WNSL crown since winning the inaugural title in 1996-1997.

NSW Sapphires midfielder Emma Davison provided the highlight of well contested first-half.

The 15 year-old hit the underside of the crossbar and along with the rest of the Sapphires, claimed that the ball bounced down over the line, but the referee did not rule in favour.

Towards the end of the match, Australia Schoolgirls striker Catherine Cannuli had a shot cleared off the line and in the last minute, Sapphires vice-captain Taryn Rockall dribbled into the penalty area only to be bundled over by Queensland goalkeeper Claire Nichols.

QUEENSLAND STING 1

The referee judged in favour of Queensland Sting by not awarding a penalty.

Rockall was later taken to hospital for precautionary x-rays.

NSW Sapphires Coach Allan Bourke was philosophical following the loss.

"Before the start of the season, the NSW Sapphires were written off as 'too weak' and 'too young' to make an impact in the WNSL," he said.

"Well, today we pushed the very best in the country to the absolute limit.

"We could have even won this game. We had the chances, and deserved a better result, but it wasn't to be. The players fought so hard and I am very proud of this young team.

"With the talent we have playing at the moment, we are embarking on a very exciting era of women's football in NSW."

An interested onlooker at the WNSL Grand Final was Matildas Coach, Adrian Santrac, who will confirm his squad for January's Australia Cup tournament.

Sapphires vice-captain, Taryn Rockall, cemented her chances to make the squad after winning both the Julie Dolan Medal for the WNSL Player of the Season and the WNSL top goalscorer award, for her six goals this campaign.

Five other Sapphires players are widely tipped to have a chance of wearing the green and gold, namely, Anissa Tann-Darby (right), Justine McLaughlin, Kelly Golebiowski, Michelle Carney and Cassandra Kell.

Queensland Sting 1 (Bartlett, 55m)
NSW Sapphires 0

NSW: Cassandra Kell, Anissa Tann-Darby (captain), Lisa Warrener, Kristine Collins, Emma Davison, Neisha Klessattel, Lisa Collins, Taryn Rockall, Thea Slatyer (Kelly Golebiowski 58m), Michelle Carney, Justine McLaughlin (Catherine Cannuli 68m) Unused Substitutes: Kathryn Collins, Kylie Ledbrook, Justine King

ASICS NSL BIG MATCH REPORT

Tobin misses but Parra Power on against Pride

POWER captain Alex Tobin could afford to smile at his missed penalty as he savoured the accolades of a record breaking soccer performance after the Power's 2-nil victory over the Eastern Pride in Bathurst on Saturday.

Tobin established a new national soccer league appearance record of 446 matches eclipsing the mark established by Sergio Melta.

It was an historic achievement that so easily could have been celebrated with a goal after Tobin stepped up to the spot just before fulltime following a foul on replacement striker Joel Griffiths.

But his kick was well saved by Pride `keeper Bojo Jevdjevec.

"I wasn't planning to take it and they sort of revved me up to get up there and have a go and unfortunately it didn't go in - but that's life," Tobin said about his penalty attempt.

"Fortunately the game was won and I'm pleased the result went the way it did.

"I'm proud to have been able to play so many games and to break the record and hopefully continue for many more years

"Tonight was obviously important for me but just as important was how the team's travelling and wanting to get the three points and it was nice to celebrate my occasion with an overall good team performance and a good team win

"It's three in a row and obviously the team is full of confidence."

Goals from striker Joe Miller, his sixth of the season and Ahmad Elrich, just a minute before halftime, secured Power their third successive victory and a place in the NSL top six.

Miller struck in the 20th minute following some poor Pride defending.

Peter Bennett's long throw into the box was flicked on but defender Paul Wearne was unable to clear the ball and Miller was left with an open shot from just two metres out.

FOOTBALL KINGZ 2
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 2

Parramatta Power 2 (J Miller 20', A Elrich 44')
Eastern Pride 0
Cautions. R Puca (EP) 16', S Berry (PP) 39', M Stergiopoulos (EP) 75', A Clark (PP) 82', P Wearne (EP) 87', D Lee (PP) 88
Venue: Carrington Park, Bathurst
Referee Matthew Breeze
Parramatta Power: 1 Andrew Crews (gk) 3 Ahmad Elrich 4 Nick Orlic 5 Alex Tobin 8 Walter Ardone (-67') 9 Joe Miller 11 Steve Berry (-70') 12 Damien Brown 13 Milan Blagojevic 22 Joe Vrkic (-75') 28 Peter Bennett Substitutes 10 Joel Griffiths (+70') 23 Andrew Clark (+67') 29 David Lee (+75') 24 Liam Reddy (gk)
Eastern Pride: 1 Bojo Jevdjevic (gk) 2 Dean Fak 4 Dong Ki Kim 8 Clayton Bell 9 Neville Roach 10 Robbie Puca (-60') 11 John Hutchinson 17 Paul Wearne 18 Daniel Watkins 19 Adam Griffiths (-60') 25 Marcus Stergiopoulos Substitutes 3 Manny Gotis (+60') 12 Naum Sekulovski (+60') 14 Juan Nilo

WOLVES STEP UP A GEAR TO PUSH ASIDE UNITED

NSL champion Wollongong continued its impressive home record at Wollongong Stadium with a 2-0 victory over a spirited Sydney United on Saturday.

Second half goals from striker Saso Petrovski and defender Alvin Ceccoli helped Wollongong to its third win, plus a draw from five home matches this season.

The Wolves weren't at their best but showed enough patches of classy play to overrun a determined United.

Both goals came from corners from the left provided by Wolves midfielder Paul Reid with United coach Alan Hunter angry with his side's defending

"Both were bad goals," Hunter said.

"You can't defend like that at corners at this level

"I thought we were exposed for our defending but at the same time should have scored at least one goal."

There was one controversial moment in the 63rd minute with United striker Ante Deur having a goal disallowed for offside with the visitors trailing 1-0.

Hunter said he could not tell whether it was offside but said his players believed it was a legitimate goal

After a lack-lustre first half Wollongong stepped up a gear immediately after halftime and were rewarded with a goal from Petrovski on 49 minutes.

The striker took full toll of lax marking heading home Reid's in-swinging corner from seven metres.

Wollongong had several half chances to grab a vital second goal and were almost stunned by Deur, who had his effort in the 63rd minute ruled offside.

Wolves defender Ceccoli wrapped up the three points again from a Reid corner on the left.

The ball found striker Scott Chipperfield at the far post unmarked and he passed to Ceccoli who scored from ten metres with a fine left foot shot.

"I was very pleased with our effort," Wolves coach Ron Corry said.

WOLLONGONG CITY 2
SYDNEY UNITED 0

Wollongong Wolves 2 (S Petrovski 49', A Ceccoli 80') Sydney United 0
Cautions: R Younis (SU) 21', S Chipperfield (WW) 29', T Palapanis (SU) 38', A Genc (SU) 44'
Venue: WIN Stadium Referee: Gerard Connolly Crowd: 3,339
Wollongong Wolves: 20 Grant Barlow (gk) 2 George Souris (-87') 3 Alvin Ceccoli 6 Matthew Horsley 7 Paul Reid 9 Saso Petrovski 10 Stuart Young (-81') 11 Scott Chipperfield 15 David Huxley 17 Ben Blake 23 Dino Mennillo Substitutes 4 Robert Stanton 8 Max Nicholson (+81') 18 Paul O'Grady (+87') 1 Daniel Beltrame
Sydney United: 20 Steve Tolios (gk) 3 Danny Burt 5 Richard Plesa 7 Ray Younis 9 Zlatko Arambasic 12 Tom Maric 13 Ante Deur (-73') 14 Kain Rastall 15 Aytec Genc 18 Goran Talevski (-85') 21 Terry Palapanis (-64') Substitutes 10 Nahuel Arrarte (+85') 16 Commins Menapi (+73') 19 Shane Webb (+64') 1 Brett Hughes (gk)

WORLD YOUTH CUP EXTRA

Joeys wrap up Group A

AUSTRALIA 5
SAMOA 0

AUSTRALIA wrapped up Group A of the Oceania Football Confederation Under-17 Qualifiers, with a comfortable 5-0 victory over home nation Samoa last Tuesday (December 12)

The Joeys were kept goal-less to half time, but then opened the floodgates, captain for the day Alex Wilkinson leading the way with a header which opened the scoreline in the 47th minute

Twenty minutes later, midfielder Fred Agius brought his tally for the tournament to seven, capitalising on a goalkeeping error to put Australia's second away, that effort increased just two minutes later by striker Matthew Engele

Second half replacement Anthony Danze headed in Australia's fourth on the 83rd minute mark, while Wilkinson wrapped the game up for the Joeys, with a shot from just outside of the box in the last minute of play, the defender coming home with three goals to his credit.

"It was another difficult match today, the ground was in particularly poor condition as you might expect with the number of games played on it, it was very bumpy and hard, and the Samoans played defensively," said coach Ange Postecoglou after the game.

"All in all, it was a tough first half which ended nil-all, but the boys picked up their game in the second half, and as a result we got five

"Overall, I'm delighted with the performance of the whole squad - we've scored 43 goals in four games and haven't conceded one, and on top of that picked up just 2 yellow cards in the tournament, and I really couldn't ask any more of the players."

The team arrived back in Sydney late last week, buoyed not only by the Group victory, but by confirmation from world governing body FIFA, that the 30-0 victory over American Samoa in the first game has been officially registered as a world record in international football, and is by far the biggest victory margin FIFA has recorded for a competitive international match at any stage

OFC UNDER-17 QUALIFIERS - GROUP
AUSTRALIA 5 (A Wilkinson 47' 89', F Agius 67', M Engele 69', A Daaze 83')
SAMOA 0
AUSTRALIA: Jacob Rex (gk); Rodney Madigan, Alex Wilkinson (capt), Brett Studman (Carl Valeri 42'); Michael Brown, Russell Waller (Anthony Danze 78'), Massimo Murdocca, Sean Walsh, Fred Agius; Matthew Engele, Jay Lucas.

ASICS NSL BIG MATCH REPORT

Catlin record shut-out defies classy Blues

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 1
NORTHERN SPIRIT 1

Northern Spirit remained in the Top Six after securing its third consecutive draw in the National Soccer League, this time sharing the points with a 1-1 draw against the resurgent Melbourne Knights in Melbourne on Sunday evening.

In hot and steamy conditions, Northern Spirit took the lead in the 48th minute when striker Ben Burgess scored his 6th goal of the season only to concede an equaliser through Joel Porter in the 66th minute.

The teams went to half time locked at 0-0 after a stale first half in which the Spirit side consolidated before coming out after the break to run at the Knights defence.

The tactics paid instant dividends when Burgess held off his marker in a 30m run before slotting the ball home with his left foot. It was a goal that illustrated the strength of the teenager and boosted confidence in the Spirit camp.

Northern Spirit bombarded the Knights goal for the next 15 minutes with Scott Thomas hitting the bar and Burgess unlucky when a thumping header struck Knights 'keeper Lupce Acesvki from close range.

Before the match Coach Graham Arnold pin-pointed Porter as the man to watch and his fears were realised when Porter swooped on a loose ball in the penalty box to rocket the ball into the top of the net.

The goal came after Paul Henderson made a tremendous one-on-one save only to see the ball fall into Porter's path.

"I thought we did alright in patches but it was very tough out there with the heat," Arnold said.

"Before the match we decided to go at them in patches because no one could go hard for 90 minutes in that heat."

Despite taking the draw and extending the unbeaten run to four matches, Arnold has promised changes this week for the Spirit's Christmas clash with Brisbane Strikers at North Sydney Oval on Friday night.

"I will definitely make a change or two for this week," Arnold said. "We are picking up points and moving forward but I think we need a fresh injection."

Melbourne Knights 1 (J Porter 65') Northern Spirit 1 (B Burgess 48')
Cautions: D Nastevski (MK) 44', M Bingley (NS) 50', C Foster (NS) 53', S Ognenovski (MK) 78', S Thomas (NS) 82'
Venue: Knights Stadium Referee: Edward Lennie Crowd: 4,320
Melbourne Knights: 20 Lupce Acevski (gk) 3 Rodrigo Vargas 4 Sasa Ognenovski 5 Jason Vukadin 6 Joey Rajher (-75') 8 Dragi Nastevski 9 Joel Porter (-77') 16 Alex Kiratzoglou 18 Andy Vargas 21 Zolton Zold (-51') 25 Adrian Cervinski. Substitutes: 15 Ransford Banini (+75') 19 Anthony Pehkan (+77') 27 Ivan Jolic (+51') 29 Robert Graskoski (gk)
Spirit: 20 Henderson (gk) 2 Cunico 3 Langdon 4 Bingley 6 Thomas 8 Enes 9 Moreira (-73') 11 Troy Cranney (-46') 12 Ben Burgess 25 Craig Foster (-89') 30 Graham Arnold. Substitutes: 14 Noel Spencer (+46') 17 Paul Bilokapic (+89') 19 Ryan Griffiths (+73') 1 John Perosh (gk)

Migraine at Marconi

MARCONI STALLIONS 0
ADELAIDE CITY 2

A FRESH Adelaide City has shown up a Marconi side devoid of attacking options in the national soccer league match at Marconi Stadium in Sydney on Saturday.

Given a week's lay-off after last round's match against the financially-stricken Carlton was cancelled, the Force proved to be the much better finisher, shutting out the home side 2-0. Adelaide striker Claudio Pelosi proved the difference between two teams intent on doing very little until pushed into action.

Excellent lead-up work by striker Brad Hassell gave Pelosi a simple tap in after 59 minutes and suddenly Marconi realised they couldn't win the game just by turning up.

Despite dominating for the next 20 minutes the home side could not buy a goal and Pelosi ended the Stallions night with a sharp header off a beauuful Gianluca Lagati cross in the 82nd minute.

Marconi had slightly the better of an uninspiring first half, notable for more yellow cards than clear-cut scoring opportunities.

At one stage referee Brett Hugo handed out four cards in four minutes, stalling an already stop-start game.

The Stallions' Kris Trajanovski had the best chance to score in the half, cracking a curving shot at close quarters in the 13 minute, only to narrowly miss.

While Adelaide got the points coach Zoran Matic wasn't going home to ponder the nuances of the game with a video replay and a beer.

"I don't need to watch that crap because I've got a headache," Matic said.

"We got the result but it created more headaches because we were so flat."

Matic could find himself with another migraine when it comes to team selection next week with defender Fabrizio Bucciarelli earning an automatic two week suspension after receiving a red card for repeated infringements.

For Marconi it was a match indicative of its season to date - strong enough to compete but lacking the strikepower to force a result.

Marconi Stallions 0
Adelaide City Force 2 (C Pelosi 58', 81')
Cautions: D Longo (MS) 41', G Lagati (AC) 43', G Last (MS) 43', S Tunbridge (AC) 45', S Bell (MS) 82'
Red Cards: G Bucciarelli (AC) 91'
Venue: Marconi Stadium
Referee: Brett Hugo
Crowd: 2,981
Marconi Stallions: 1 David Aceski (gk) 4 Angelo Costanzo 5 Dominic Longo 6 Pan-Keun Kim 7 James Afkos 11 Christian Care (-61') 14 Buddy Farah 15 Royce Brownlie (-61') 21 Simon Bell 22 Kris Trajanovski 27 Grant Last (-45') Substitutes: 2 Chad Gibson (+45') 8 Darren McDonald (+61') 16 Harry Karl (+61') 20 Michael Turnbull (gk)
Adelaide City Force: 1 Adrian Cagalj (gk) 2 Gianluca Lagati 4 Ante Kovacevic 5 Fabrizio Bucciarelli 8 Carl Veart 10 Aurelio Vidmar 11 Bradley Hassell 12 Scott Tunbridge (-65') 15 Lucas Pantelis 18 Ivan Karlovic 19 Claudio Pelosi
Substitutes: 14 Aaron Goulding 23 Nick Budin 24 Nathan Day (+65') 20 Daniel Godley (gk)

Catlin record shut-out defies classy Blues

By Greg Danvers

NEWCASTLE UNITED 0
SOUTH MELBOURNE 0

BOB Catlin became the first NSL keeper to record 100 clean sheets when Newcastle United held league leader South Melbourne to a 0-0 draw in Newcastle on Friday night.

The match ball will become Catlin's most treasured memento from 325 national league matches after his teammates dug deep and plugged what has been a leaky defence.

"The boys worked hard for me tonight," an elated Catlin said.

"I didn't have to do much they really put in a great effort.

"I got the match ball signed by both teams and that will be mounted and put up at home.

"It's a milestone."

Newcastle started the match full of fire that had been pumped into them all week after heavy losses to Wollongong and Perth in the last two weeks.

Anthony Magnacca, playing against his former club, shot wide of goal in the fourth minute to give the 5,862 Novacastrians a taste of what was to come.

Time after time the United players mounted pressure on South Melbourne only to either take the wrong option or turn over possession in the penalty area.

"I don't know who you would have known was on the top half or who was on the bottom half of the ladder tonight," South Melbourne coach Mike Petersen said.

"It was a great credit to Newcastle for their endeavour and commitment.

"Both teams were really at it we are happy to come away with a point as it is always a tough road trip to Newcastle."

United coach Lee Sterrey had been looking for a return to some street fighter qualities and tonight Newcastle showed some mental and physical toughness to hold the polished Victorians scoreless.

"At halftime and a nil-all against a team like South Melbourne I thought we were very much in the game," Sterrey said.

"They are a quality side with quality players all over the park.

"We had plenty of option in the first half but we were a bit gun shy.

"I was happy with the overall quality of the football that was played tonight by both sides."

Newcastle United 0 South Melbourne 0
Cautions: B Wieczorek (NU) 75', M Durakovic (SM) 83'
Venue: Marathon Stadium Referee: Simon Micallef Crowd: 5,862
Newcastle United: 1 Bob Catlin (gk) 3 Andrew Roberts 4 Chris Zoricich 5 Todd McManus 6 Glenn Sprod (-51') 7 Travis Dodd 8 Mark Wilson 9 Anthony Magnacca 10 John Buonavoglia 11 Peter Tsekenis (-91') 13 Brad Wieczorek (-86') Substitutes: 14 Anthony Surjan (+86') 16 Vasko Trpcevski (+91') 19 Daniel McBreen (+51') 20 Bradley Swancott (gk)
South Melbourne: 1 Michael Petkovic (gk) 3 Fausto De Amicis 4 Mehmet Durakovic 6 David Clarkson (-74') 7 Steve Panopoulos 8 Vaughan Coveny (-80') 9 Paul Trimboli 10 Con Boutsianis 13 Andrew Vlahos 16 Zeljko Susa (-69') 19 Patrick Kisnorbo. Substitutes: 2 Steve Iosifidis (+74') 14 Vas Kalogeracos (+80') 15 Goran Lozanovski (+69') 23 Michael Theoklitas (gk)

ASICS NSL BIG MATCH REPORT

Strikers late night-mare continues

BRISBANE STRIKERS 1
KINGZ FC 1

BRISBANE Strikers' hopes of reviving their national soccer league playoff hopes suffered a setback when they were held to a 1-1 draw by the Football Kingz at Suncorp Stadium.

The Strikers, one point ahead of the Kingz on the table, came from behind to share the points after the Kingz took a 1-0 lead on the stroke of halftime.

Former German first division striker Wynton Rufer continued the Strikers' nightmare of conceding late goals when he latched onto a Jon Perry cross to tap in from close range deep into injury time in the opening half.

The goal ripped the heart out of the Strikers players who valiantly clawed their way back into the game after the Kingz dominated the first 20 minutes

The Strikers had to wait until the 72nd minute for their equaliser when the club's leading scorer Paul Foster struck home his fifth goal of the season.

The goal came after defender Shane Stefanutto hit a perfect cross to the far post for skipper Stu McLaren, who headed across the goal mouth to Foster - his shot hooking past Kingz keeper Chris Marsh.

The Strikers had an earlier chance in the 56th minute to equalise when a McLaren shot from inside the box was headed off the goal line by international midfielder Harry Ngata.

The Kingz started strongly and easily dominated proceedings in the first 20 minutes before the home side launched a spirited fight-back before conceding their first half goal

Brazilian striker Fernando stamped his mark on the game particularly in the first half with several scoring opportunities

Strikers midfielder Wayne Srhoj put Fernando away into the penalty box where the Brazilian showed the small crowd just what a lethal left foot shot he possessed.

Fernando's 16th minute attempt was struck like a missile onto post.

Fernando had another chance six minutes later when a header from the penalty spot which marginally over the crossbar.

Brisbane Strikers 1 (P Foster 71') Kingz FC 1 (W Rufer 47')
Cautions. P Foster (BS) 15', S Smeltz (BS) 40', J Perry (K) 43', H Ngata (K) 48', N Meredith (BS) 65'
Venue: Suncorp Metway Stadium Referee. Kevin Stock
Crowd: 2,665
Brisbane Strikers: 1 Daniel Duke (gk) 3 Shane Stefanutto 5 Matthew Bell (-80') 9 Paul Foster 10 Wayne Srhoj 13 Stuart McLaren 14 Jade North (-70') 15 Andrew Davidson 16 Shane Smeltz (60') 18 Nick Meredith 22 Fernando Rech
Substitutes 8 Adam Webber (+80') 11 Peter Dwyer (+60') 21 Lawrence Drake (+70')
Kingz FC 20 Chris Marsh (gk) 3 Aaran Lines 4 Levent Osman 5 Jonathon Perry 7 Wynton Rufer (-60') 10 Andreas Bluhm 12 Heremaia Ngata (-80') 15 Ivan Vicelich 18 Michael Cartwright 21 Riki Van Steeden 30 Mark Burton (-83') Substitutes 8 Gerard Davis (+83') 16 Lee Jones (+80') 25 Tim Stevens (+60') 1 Julio Cuello

Parisi gives Olympic late Canberra win

By Graham Cooke

CANBERRA COSMOS 2
SYDNEY OLYMPIC 3

AN inspired substitution by Sydney Olympic coach Branko Culina brought his side three valuable national soccer league points in a 3-2 away win against the Canberra Cosmos in Canberra on Saturday night.

Culina brought on Franco Parisi in the 64th minute and the teenager proceeded to punish the lax Cosmos defence by scoring twice in four minutes

The reversal left Canberra coach Tom Sermanni fuming

"We threw this game away," he said.

"We are going to have to stop giving the opposition soft goals.

"I am bitterly disappointed, in my opinion this is far worse than being outclassed and going down by a hatful."

The quick reaction of Canberra defender Shane Lyons denied Olympic a fifth minute lead when his overhead kick cleared the ball off the line

It fell to Olympic's Greg Owens, who drove it straight at goalkeeper Angelo Konstantinou.

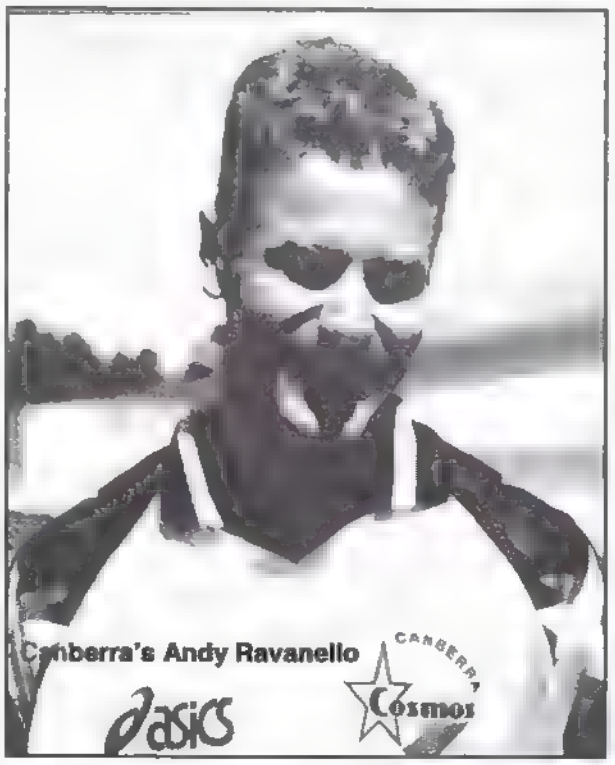
A clever back-heel from Andrew Ravanello handed Canberra a chance to take the lead soon after, but striker Jon Angelucci's well struck shot sailed just over the bar.

Olympic punished Canberra for their inability to score, taking the lead in the 36th minute

The Cosmos defence failed to pick up Owens near the edge of the penalty area and the striker drove his shot wide of Konstantinou into the far corner of the net.

Canberra equalised in the last minute of the half, debutant Milton Cortes doing the hard work with a penetrating run and hitting the perfect pass for Maoki Imaya to score. The same combination worked again a minute after the interval, Cortes spotting Imaya and his pass giving the midfielder time to choose his spot.

However Parisi's substitution turned the game and led to his side securing three valuable points.

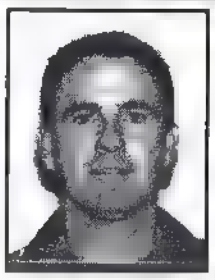


Three minutes after taking the field Parisi had leveled the match and four minutes later he made sure Olympic picked up the win.

Canberra Cosmos 2 (N Imaya 43', 46')
Sydney Olympic 3 (G Owens 35', F Parisi 66', 70')

Cautions: N Purdue (CC) 24', D Collina (SO) 29, J Angelucci (CC) 41', A Rakic (CC) 71', A Ravanello (CC) 85'
Canberra Cosmos: 1 Angelo Konstantinou (gk) 3 Toplica Popovich 4 Andrew Ravanello 5 Nicholas Purdue (-73') 6 Naoki Imaya 10 Jon Angelucci (-79') 11 David Arranz 12 Milton Cortes 13 Shane Lyons (-63') 17 Robbie Hooker 19 Hiroshi Miyazawa
Substitutes 7 Mark Hagger (+79') 14 Andy Rakic (+63') 18 Brad Scott (+73') 29 Rade Kosanovic
Sydney Olympic: 1 Clint Bolton (gk) 2 Sebastian Sinozic 4 Paul Kohler (-45') 5 Scott Baillie 6 Ante Juric 7 Kresimir Marusic 10 Troy Halpin (-64') 13 Damon Collina (-70') 14 Greg Owens 19 Nick Carle 22 Peter Zorbas Substitutes 12 Glenn Moore (+70') 16 Franco Parisi (+64') 17 Elias Augerinos (+45') 20 John Karoubas (gk)

COKELY ON THE NSL



THE lack of money and the dissipated push for a prominent role for soccer in Australian society is bedevilling the game at the moment.

Ever since its inception as the Phillips Soccer League it has been the same when it comes to real money to advance the sport.

Our N.S.L. struggles to keep up with changes happening in soccer around the world and in other sporting codes in Australia.

The reason is simplistic yet inescapable.

In comparison, Soccer Australia is as poor as a church mouse, but do not seem to be doing a whole lot about it in a marketing sense.

Red cards against racism are a honourable effort, but are not going to get fans rushing through the gates.

Finance is the single most important issue in our game.

How can S.A. raise revenues to push our league forward to be competitive in the market place?

SA had an ideal opportunity to make soccer back page news last week with Alex Tobin.

In no other sport in Australia has somebody played 446 games in the National League.

Did you see the story on the back pages?

Could it have been on every back page?

The media should have been flooded with any promotion the N.S.L. could have got out of it, but it slipped by again.

Maybe SA did everything they could and were thwarted by indifferent sports editors.

Whatever the case, only a reported 2000 fans at Bathurst represents another lost opportunity.

One woman in Bathurst had family tickets for the game but at the last minute decided to go to the local colouring-in competition with the kids.

Can you believe it!

Media commentators are also missing the point when it comes to money and promoting the game.

Calls this week for SA to bail out Carlton were wide of the mark.

Ha, what a joke.

Bail them out with what?

Others want to improve referees or bring in the interchange rule for substitutes as a way to promote the game.

What about public floggings of Soccer administrators, refs and commentators—that would pack the crowds in

The reason the likes of A.F.L. clubs Collingwood and Carlton and N.R.L. club Parramatta were accepted into the league in the first instance was the lure of soft warm cash pouring into the Soccer Australia coffers from licensed clubs owned by the big guns from other codes.

In a better world, this week Carlton would be taken over by SA until they were solvent just as the A.F.L. did with the Sydney Swans.

The take-over solutions that have been proposed for Carlton appear to be very short term.

As soon as a guarantee of a place in next year's competition was asked for the bids were exposed as timid.

Private owners become very weary of throwing good money after bad, but any prospective owner must be able to provide long- term not interim support in conjunction with a centrally co-ordinated marketing campaign.

It is a difficult proposition to gain a solid fan base without a high media profile.

How many times have Tom Jones and Tina Turner ever sung for the N.S.L.?

Are they ever likely to?

Not until Soccer Australia is in a financially sound position to take control of a coordinated push for a greater market share for Soccer.

Then it might be in a position to bail out the likes of Carlton.

Not this time sorry.

Bryan Cokely is a former player with experience at a high level with Swansea City and Wollongong Wolves. He has also spent some time coaching. More recently he has written for Inside Soccer *and our sister publication,* CelticWorld. *Bryan brings a player's perspective to journalism.*

COMING IN 2001 .....
SuperSoccer on
TUESDAYS

ASICS PREMIER LEAGUE BIG MATCH REPORT

NSW Premier League Top Scorers
Steve Lazzari (Belconnen) 10
Darren Iocca (Blacktown City) 8
Javier Mancino (Bonnyrigg) 6
Niko Joseski (Parramatta Eagles) 4
Colin Luff (Bonnyrigg) 4

Goal Statistics

In 32 games of NSW Premier League football, played over seven rounds, there have been 104 goals scored, an average of 3.3 goals per game.

Steve Lazzari has scored 10 (or 67%) of Belconnen's 15 goals this season.

Bonnyrigg, with a game in hand, have scored 4 more goals this season than both Blacktown City and Belconnen, and are averaging 3.2 goals per game.

Holiday Break
The next full round of matches in the NSW Premier League commences on 6 January 2001.
However, there are rescheduled washout fixtures during the Christmas and New Year break, namely:

St George Saints v Parramatta Eagles, St George Stadium, Wednesday 20 December, 6 & 8pm
Bonnyrigg White Eagles v Canterbury Marrickville Olympic, Serbian Centre, Saturday 23 December, 5 & 7pm
Canterbury Marrickville Olympic v Leichhardt Tigers, Henson Park, Friday 29 December, 6 & 8pm

Round 8 Fixtures (Under 19 and First Grade)

St George v Central Coast, St George Stadium, Saturday 6 January, First Grade kickoff at 7pm, Under 19 kickoff at 5pm
Blacktown City v Bonnyrigg, Gabbie Stadium, Saturday 6 January, First Grade kickoff at 7pm, Under 19 kickoff at 5pm
Sutherland v Canterbury Marrickville, Seymour Shaw Park, Saturday 6 January, First Grade kickoff at 7pm, Under 19 kickoff at 5pm
Belconnen v Leichhardt, West Belconnen Sports Ground, Saturday 6 January, First Grade kickoff at 6.30pm, Under 19 kickoff at 4.30pm
Penrith v Parramatta Eagles, Andrews Road Field, Saturday 6 January, First Grade kickoff at 7pm, Under 19 kickoff at 5pm

Bonnyrigg fail to spark against Sutherland

by Binesh Mudaliar

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 0
SUTHERLAND SHARKS 0

WITH star signing, Chris Bradley, running around in the Under-19s, Bonnyrigg Coach Doug Utjesenovic opted to replace the suspended Michael Hawrysiuk with Stewart Van Bentum, in the only change to the starting line-up that defeated Parramatta Eagles midweek.

And perhaps the midweek outing was the cause of a lacklustre display by Bonnyrigg, despite Javier Mancino scoring his fifth goal in two games in the sixth minute.

From that point, Bonnyrigg departed from their simple but highly effective passing game and concentrated on individual efforts for the majority of the remainder of the match.

Nevertheless it came as quite a shock when Sutherland equalised, with defender Alen Stajcic converting a goalmouth scramble in the 28th minute.

The match struggled to keep the crowd entertained until the final twenty minutes when Johnny Ghisso and Bobby Dragas came off the bench in an attempt to fire Bonnyrigg to a win.

However, the closest the home side came to sealing the three points was a Van Bentum screamer from 20 metres out that hit the side netting. Sutherland also had their chances to win with the game nearing an end.

Grant Bard, with only Fernando Greco to beat from 12 metres, was denied a meaningful shot by a sliding David Harding tackle while Anthony Kanaan's swerving drive from 15 metres out was uncharacterstically spilled by Greco, but cleared by the White Eagles defence.

Bonnyrigg will rue two missed points while Sutherland have to wait till the new year for their first win of the season.

Bonnyrigg 1 (Mancino 6m)
Sutherland 1 (Stajcic 28m)

Venue: Serbian Centre
Referee: Greg Leverton
Attendance: 500

Bonnyrigg: Greco, Utjesenovic, Warburton, Devrimol, Mancino, Harding, Luff, Gomez, Van Bentum, Reid, Huseyin Subs on: Dragas, Ghisso
Cautions: Huseyin 64m

Sutherland: Premutico, Judge, Pettenon, Robertson, Stajcic, McDonald, Bard, Trposki, Kanaan, Pullicino, Pizzana Subs on: MacDonald, Zelvis
Cautions: Robertson 12m, Premutico 33m, Pettenon 33m

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Further details from Bruce Campbell on 4285 7480 or 0413 435 191.

ASICS PREMIER LEAGUE BIG MATCH REPORT

Christmas comes early at Lambert as ref cards four

By Mark Fowler

LEICHHARDT TIGERS 3
PARRAMATTA EAGLES 6

IF YOU wanted value for money then Lambert Park was the place to be on Saturday night, with nine goals, three penalties, four dismissals and incidents galore in the 90 minutes.

In truth though this game had descended into a debacle long before Adam Anderson scored Parramatta's sixth of the game, against a team playing with eight men and striker Matthew Borg in goal.

It was a disgraceful display of indiscipline by the Tigers, although everything looked good when they started brightly and opened the scoring on 19 minutes through James Stubbs-Mills.

He lashed the ball superbly into the roof of the net with his left-foot from the edge of the penalty area.

With Sal La Rocca having had a snap shot well saved by Parramatta Eagles goalkeeper Jason Holmes just seven minutes before, and the Tigers looking far more dangerous than their opponents, there was little indication of what was to happen.

The game turned on 24 minutes, when a Parramatta header seemed goal-bound from a corner, only for the ball to be palmed onto the underside of the crossbar and bounce out.

The only problem for Leichhardt was that is was Stubbs-Mills who made the save, and he was promptly red-carded and a penalty awarded.

Nikolce Joseski made no mistake from the spot, and from sitting with a one-goal lead the Tigers suddenly found themselves pegged back and with a player less than their opponents.

Even so it was still an even game, Zoki Adioski shooting straight at Holmes when he should have done better after some neat interchanges with Steve Karavatakis.

Danial Cummings then flashed a header just wide for Parramatta on 25 minutes, but seven minutes later a free kick saw right wing-back Ben Delicata sneak in and prod the ball past Leichhardt's goalkeeper Con Anastasiadis, despite the best efforts of Richard Luksic.

Four minutes later it was 3-1, with Balla Conde playing the ball to Joseski who steered the ball inside the near post.

Leichhardt were being run ragged at this stage, and a minute after the third goal it was 4-1, Cummins smacking a shot past Anastasiadis from 25 metres out.

The game looked all over, and even more so when Andrew Nolan brought down Anderson for the clearest penalty you will see just after the hour mark, but Joseski fired straight at the overworked Anastasiadis.

A minute later the third penalty of the game was awarded when Tigers substitute Matthew Borg had his shirt pulled in the area, and La Rocca made no mistake from the spot.

Both teams were having chances galore – Balla Conde took an age to shoot when he could easily have scored, and the resulting corner saw Cummins head downwards, the ball bouncing up and hitting the crossbar.

Joe Bruni then shot over for the Tigers when he could have done better, but the game then turned nasty after an altercation between Michael Galluzzo and Cummins.

It appeared as though Cummins had swung an elbow towards Galluzzo, which the assistant referee saw and flagged referee Vic Gauci.

Galluzzo though took the law into his own hands, earning a yellow card for his troubles and then seconds later another one for throwing the ball towards Gauci.

The second yellow may have been a bit harsh, but if Cummins did use an elbow he can have no complaints when, after some delay, Gauci dismissed him too.

Four minutes later it was 5-2 to Parramatta, former Tiger Tom Bazdaric slipping the ball to Delicata who drove home for his second, but three minutes after the Tigers pulled another goal back, Borg taking two attempts to make it, remarkably 5-3.

If you think that was the end of the action, think again.

There was still time for Anastasiadis to rush out of his area and clip an attacker with his arm, leaving Gauci again no option but to show the red card.

Borg donned the goalkeeping jumper and gloves, but could do little when Bazdaric again strode forward, and this time passed to Anderson who finished easily.

While much focus will be on the performance of Gauci, IF Cummins did elbow Galluzzo then all the dismissals were fair, although as mentioned Galluzzo may have been harshly treated by his second yellow.

In fact, Gauci was more than lenient with other Tigers players, noticeably Steve Karavatakis, Joe Bruni and Zoki Adioski, all of who in separate incidents raced up to him during the game and remonstrated in a manner that at the very least was threatening.

At least one, if not all, of those incidents could have resulted in dismissals.

"The players let themselves and the club down tonight", said Tigers coach Les DeCelis."

There was no need to add anything else.

Parramatta Eagles coach Tam Finlayson said: "I am pleased that we bounced back after a terrible performance against Bonnyrigg in midweek, and while we got a bit fancy towards the end I am just happy with the win."

It's a game no one at Lambert Park will forget for some time, and unfortunately there could be some serious repercussions from this fixture, with some ugly scenes after the final whistle.

For the football fan as exciting as it is to watch goals and controversial incidents this was all too much – it would be nice to fit in with a Christmas theme and say it was like a pantomime, but it wasn't.

It was simply farcical.

Leichhardt Tigers 3 (Stubbs-Mills 19, La Rocca 64 Pen, Borg 85')
Parramatta Eagles 6 (Joseski 24 pen, 42', Delicata 38', 82, Cummins 43', Anderson 90)
Venue: Lambert Park
Referee: Vic Gauci.
Leichhardt Tigers: Anastasiadis, Luksic, Galluzzo, Bruni, Stubbs-Mills, Karavatakis, La Rocca, Nicol, Adioski (Borg 54') Tesoro (Tomasevic 50') Lal (Fuchs 53')
Cautions: Adioski, Bruni.
Red cards: Stubbs-Mills, Galluzzo, Anastasiadis.
Parramatta Eagles: Holmes, M Meilak, Reveley, O'Shea, Anderson, Mittiga, Joseski (Borg 70') Islas (Bazdaric 67') Delicata, Cummins, Conde (Trpkoski 83')
Cautions: Islas
Red card: Cummins.

Parramatta Eagles Anthony Mittiga: on target in a game which turned into a farce

ROUND 5 RE-SCHEDULED MATCH

Mancino double hat trick sets up awesome White Eagles

By Binesh Mudaliar

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 5
PARRAMATTA EAGLES 0

A HEALTHY crowd on a wet Wednesday evening saw a merciless Bonnyrigg dispose of Parramatta Eagles, 5-0, thanks largely to a four goal haul by Bonnyrigg captain, Javier Mancino.

Bonnyrigg opened the match looking the much sharper team and it didn't take long for the glamour side of the NSW Premier League to hit the front.

Robbie Gomez, whose touch in this game was as smooth as silk, chipped exquisitely for Mancino to head in from close range in the 11th minute.

With Bonnyrigg goalkeeper, Fernando Greco, looking in great nick, the White Eagles continued to stretch Parramatta with their superb passing game.

Mancino ran onto a ball from midfield and beat Jason Holmes in a one-on-one situation from the right hand edge of the box in the 32nd minute.

Mancino completed his hattrick six minutes after the break when he buried a shot in the right hand corner of the Parramatta net from 12 metres out. Colin Luff bobbed up momentarily to steal the limelight from his captain, rounding Jason Holmes in the 64th minute to make the score 4-0.

Mancino finished the night's festivities in the 90th minute when he chipped Holmes from the right wing after the Parramatta captain found himself out of position.

An awesome display of teamwork by Bonnyrigg, with the only downside being the sending off of gifted playmaker, Michael Hawrysiuk.

Parramatta are yet to hit their best this season but can take heart from the fact that a lesser goalkeeper than Fernando Greco may have conceded several goals on this night.

Bonnyrigg 5 (Mancino 11m, 32m, 51m, 90m; Luff 64m)
Parramatta Eagles 0
Venue: Serbian Centre
Referee: Greg Leverton
Bonnyrigg: Greco, Utjesenovic, Warburton, Devrimol, Mancino, Harding, Luff, Gomez, Hawrysiuk, Reid, Huseyin Subs on: Ghisso, Dragas, Van Bentum
Cautions: Devrimol 64m
Sent-off: Hawrysiuk 69m
Parramatta Eagles: Holmes, Borg, M Meilak, Reveley, Bazdaric, O'Shea, Mittiga, Joseski, Delicata, Cummins, Conde Subs on: Anderson, Beldham, Trpkoski
Cautions: Reveley 45m

ASICS PREMIER LEAGUE BIG MATCH REPORT

Langone seals Devils win

By Greg Stock

CANTERBURY MARRICKVILLE 0
BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS 2

BELCONNEN consolidated a spot in the Premier League Top Four with a comprehensive 2-0 win over Canterbury-Marrickville at Henson Park last Saturday evening.

The Blue Devils dominated the match for long periods as the under-strength Canterbury battled away in defensive mode, hoping to break away against the run of play.

Unfortunately for them that never eventuated with Belconnen goalkeeper Anthony Giannasca only called into play a handful of times throughout the match.

While Belconnen dominated the play early it wasn't until the 20th minute that they saw that translate onto the scoreboard.

Scott Manson was the man who sent a cross from the right hand flank over to the unmarked Steve Lazzari at the far post who fired home truly to make the score 1-0.

Considering his growing profile in the Premier League, Lazzari had another strong game, and was a constant thorn in the side of the Canterbury defence.

While the second half started exactly as it did in the first, with the Blue Devils dominating, the game was not killed off as a contest until the 60th minute.

Their second goal was an absolute gem from the right foot of Leonardo Langone.

Langone received a short corner from Jaime Mauro and transferred the ball deftly to his right side.

Letting fly with a well weighted shot, the Canterbury 'keeper was unsighted as the ball neatly settled into the top left hand corner of the goal.

It was a fantastic dead ball effort but sadly for the small crowd that would be the last of scoring for the match.

The last thirty minutes saw the Blue Devils bomb a succession of chances to increase their lead.

Lazzari was the main culprit as he bombed three good chances, the last of which was a one on one with goalkeeper Phillip Zabaks which saw Lazzari offer a tame shot far too early against the advancing goalkeeper.

Despite the loss Berries coach Jim Ziras did see a lot of positives in his side composed mainly of under 19s and fringe first grade players. "

"I have eleven new players on the park" said Ziras, "and I tried to get them to concentrate more on defence, which I thought we did well.

"It's their second game together so I am in no way disappointed with what I have seen tonight."

For the Berries, new signings John Pillemer and David Blinoff, until replaced, had strong games while sixteen-year-old goalkeeper Phillip Zabaks also showed some signs that he has a lot of potential.

Zabaks earned his first Premier League start with current number one custodian Frank Mikuletic currently overseas.

For the winners, coach Lino Fiorese was happy with his side and looking forward to the new year.

"It was a great effort," he said, "and I am really happy that we finished with a clean sheet.

"We created numerous chances and dominated possession for long periods which is very pleasing."

On the subject of their long-term ambitions Fiorese was a little cautious.

"We set ourselves a target this season of being competitive in every match and so we are looking for a mid table finish.

"If we continue to over achieve a little we can reassess that as we go, but for the moment I am very very pleased with the way we are playing."

For the winners, they were well served by defenders Lee Pietrukowski and Scott Manson who both didn't put a foot wrong, while up front Matthew Julienne had a strong game as the foil for Steve Lazzari.

Belconnen's Jaime Mauro: one of the rising stars of the NSW Premier League

Canterbury-Marrickville 0
Belconnen 2 (Lazzari 20' Langone 60')
Venue: Henson Park
Canterbury-Marrickville: 1.Phillip Zabaks, 3.Greg Collins, 4.Andrew Vrahas (2.Menelaos Kallianis 74'), 5.Marcelo Guerraro, 6.Themis Kalathis, 7.Bruno Silva, 8.Yane Talcevski, 9.Steve Christoforidis, 11.Terry Sidiratos, 14.David Blinoff (12.Nick Alemis 46'), 13.John Pillemer; Subs Not Used : 5.Tristan Tulloch, 10.Christos Dimitrou.
Belconnen: 1.Anthony Giannasca, 2.Scott Manson, 3.Matt Cachia, 4.Lee Pietrukowski, 6.Jaime Mauro, 7.Oscar Zamora, 8.Leonardo Langone (19.Michael Lemezina 80'), 9.Steve Lazzari, 11. Geoffrey Howarth, 15.Mark Jenkins (13.Joshua Whittington 73'), 18.Matthew Julienne (10. George Cattanach 75')
Yellow Cards : Nil

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ASICS PREMIER LEAGUE BIG MATCH REPORT

Iocca dazzles again as Demons win switch tie

Central Coast 0 Blacktown City Demons 2 (Connolly 71, Dee 85)
Venue: Gabbie Stadium Crowd: 100
Central Coast: Moore, Daley, Matthews, Hokin, Cutler, Petey, Knight, Leary (Preston 68), Ritchie, Williams (Sontag 83), Smith (Byrn 74)
Cautions: Cutler 59 Matthews 62
Blacktown City Demons: Crawley, Yates, Gatt, Foxe, Riches, Sermanni (Angievski 72) Dee, Langan, Mikoutski (Racker 59), Connolly, Iocca (Kwasnik 79)

CENTRAL COAST 0
BLACKTOWN CITY 2

THE last game before the Christmas break was played out at The Gabbie on Sunday.

With no suitable home venue available, Central Coast switched 'home' advantage to Blacktown and the game was played out in front of a handful of players and their families.

In the end Blacktown cruised to a 2-0 win, cementing their top spot at the year's end.

But for much of the match it was a fairly even contest.

However while the Coasties tended to rush things in front of goal and Demons' keeper John Crawley positioned himself perfectly to avert any potential threat, the Blacktown players had more patience and were rewarded with both goals in the last 20 minutes.

A big clearance by Crawley, after he had saved a weak effort by Mick Williams, saw Darren Iocca and makeshift striker Jason Connolly bearing down on Darren Moore's goal in the 71st minute.

Iocca used some very clever footwork to deliver the ball in behind the last defender and in the path of Connolly who finished like a seasoned marksman.

In the 85th Blacktown doubled their lead when a Mark Racker cross from the left was nodded in at the far post by Paul Dee to seal the Coasties' fate.

The Coasties had little luck in front of goal but Crawley really had their measure as he made many fine saves, especially in the first half when Coast were most lively.

He saved brilliantly from Peter Leary in the 20th and again from the same player in the 38th after the odds had been stacked against the keeper both times.

In the end it was a shame a bigger crowd was not in attendance as the football played was of a high order with no player more entertaining or skilful than Iocca who did everything he could to lay on the necessary chances for his unaccustomed partner, Connolly, whose inevitable goal was mainly down to Iocca's vision and selfless probing throughout.

It was another satisfying day at the office for Blacktown City.

"It was a shame that the game was switched the way it was," said City coach Brian Brown.

"A lot of our players had made commitments for the Sunday but in the end it was another game.

"I'm naturally pleased to go into the break in front but there are still another eleven games to go before the Top Four.

"We will have to work just as hard in 2001 to win this league."

Taylor saves Panthers blushes

By Ben Clarke

PENRITH PANTHERS 0
ST GEORGE 4

ST GEORGE came to Penrith after earning a draw against the competition leaders.

The Panthers had also fought out a good draw against Leichhardt and were looking to record their first win for the season, but this was not going to be their day.

St George's current position on the table was deceiving as they looked a much better team than their results indicated.

Penrith started the game confidently, but St George quickly took control with some neat passing moves, especially near the opposition's penalty box.

The first goal came quickly as Kalantzis, who always looked dangerous, made a good run from his deep midfield position and pushed a perfectly weighted through-ball to Polimenakos, who then beat the Penrith keeper with a controlled finish.

If not for the efforts of Wright, and especially Taylor with some spectacular saves, St George could well have had more goals.

Penrith's intermittent possession came through good tackling, but they struggled to put passes together.

For the most part the St George defence looked very strong, but two players that did keep them busy were the speedy Hinton, who at times was too unselfish, and S Casserly who looked very sharp.

The second goal came after a typically purposeful build up by St George which looked to have broken down, but after a few failed attempts to clear, the ball fell nicely for Verrender, who powered it home from the penalty spot.

The third goal came in the second half, after the ball was lost 25 metres out; this led to a quick interchange of passes and Petrovski finished confidently.

The fourth rubbed salt into the wounds of the faithful Penrith supporters as one of their favourite players, Wright, was caught in possession by Alexiou just inside his own penalty area.

Penrith Panthers 0
St George 4 (N Polimanakos 6m, S Verrender 30m, B Petrovski 75m, L Alexiou 85m)
Venue: Andrews Road Field
Referee: Ramsin Yousif
Attendance: 200
Penrith: C Taylor, P Cleary (L Boyd 63m), B Wright, B Casserly, R Jones, D Hinton, M Driene, A Driene (J Hawkins 55m), J Grima, O El Ali, S Hammond (S Casserly 39m).
Cautions: 1 J Grima 48m
St George: S Alogdellis, N Boliantitis, S Verrender, B Petrovski, A Petratos, C Kalantzis (B Campbell 81m), N Polimenakos, A Leris (A Markopoulos 73m), E Papageorgiou (L Alexiou 66m), M Sevares.
Cautions: 1 (E Papageorgiou 66m)

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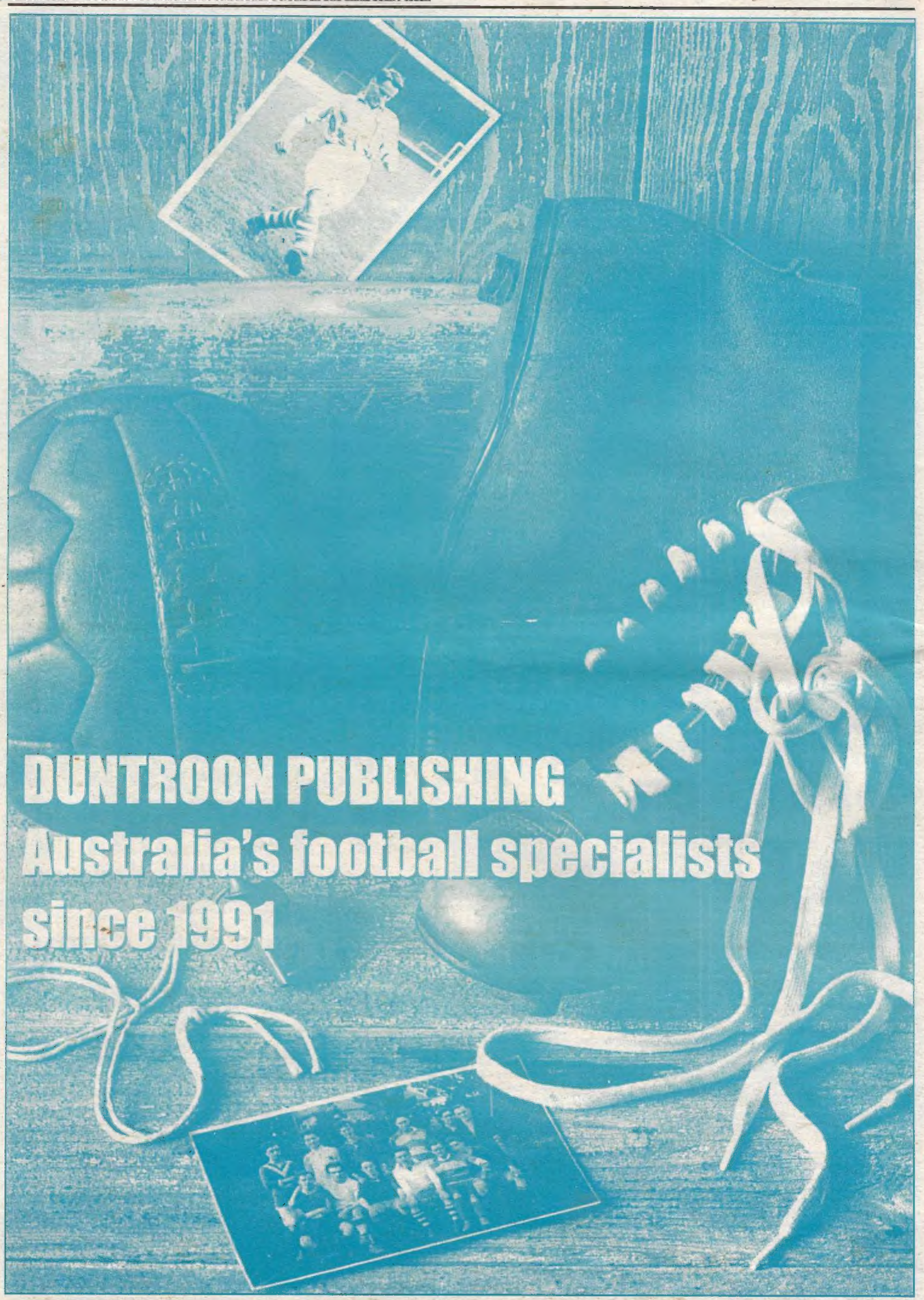

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